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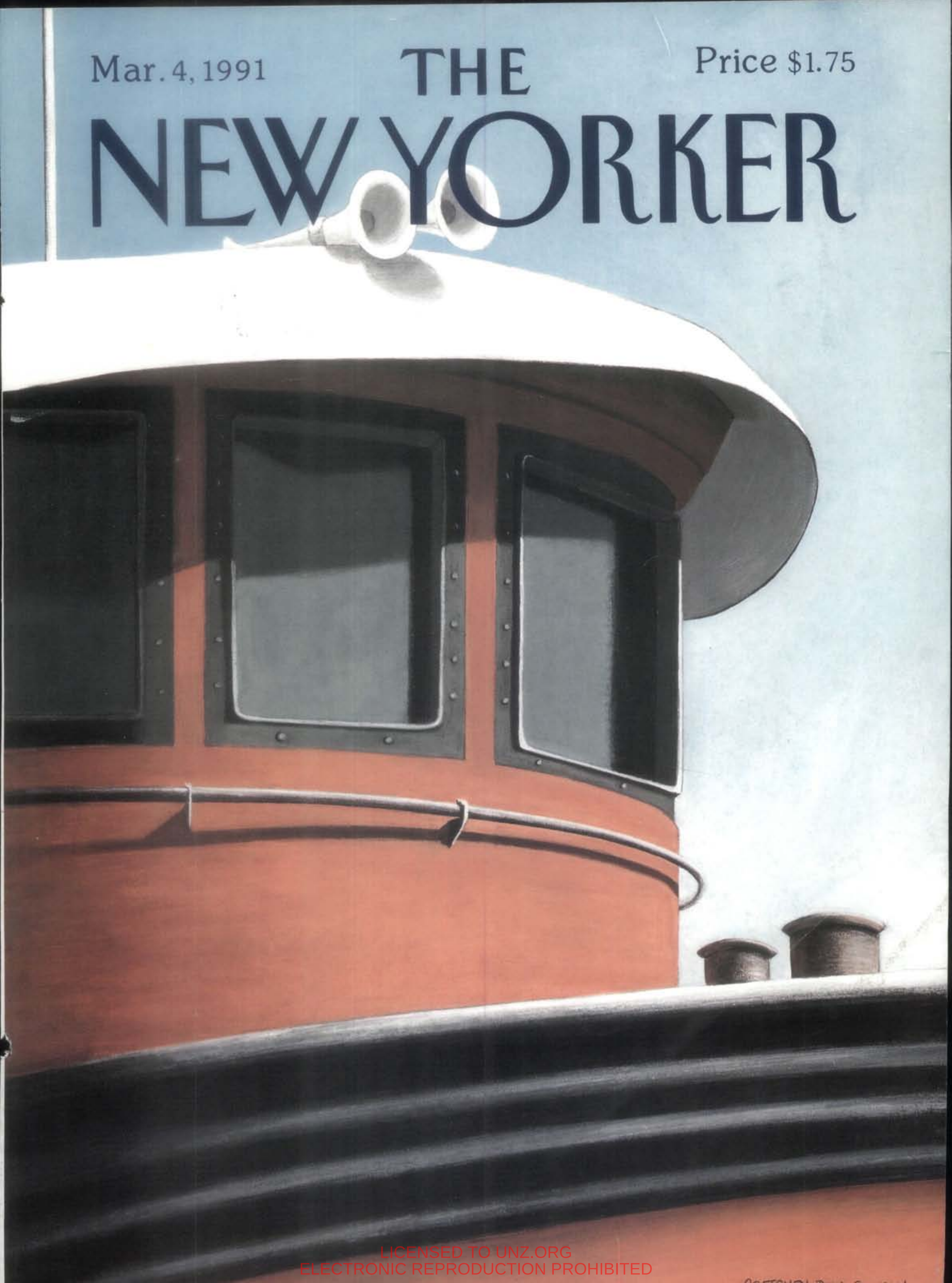

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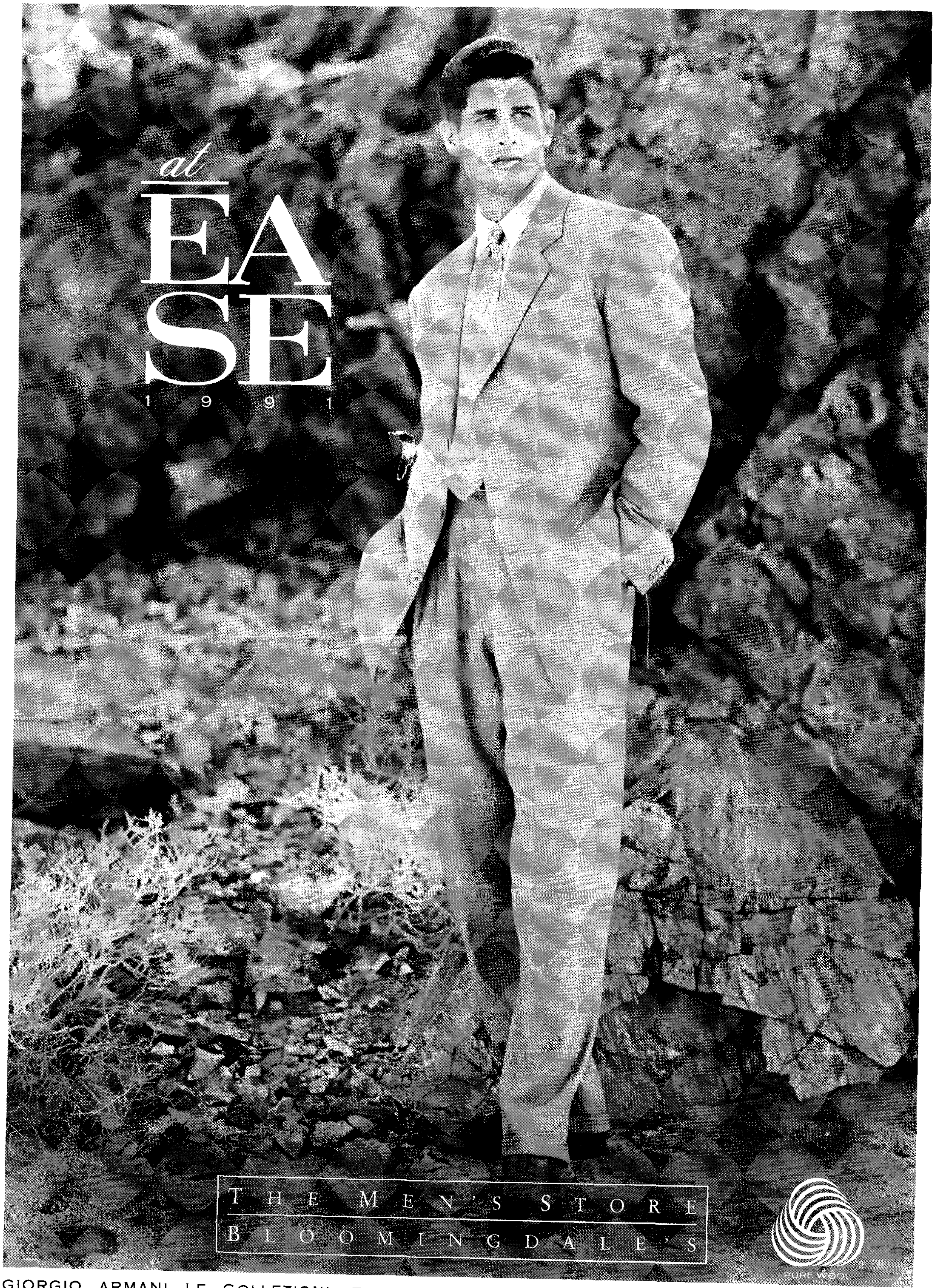
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THE NEW YORKER
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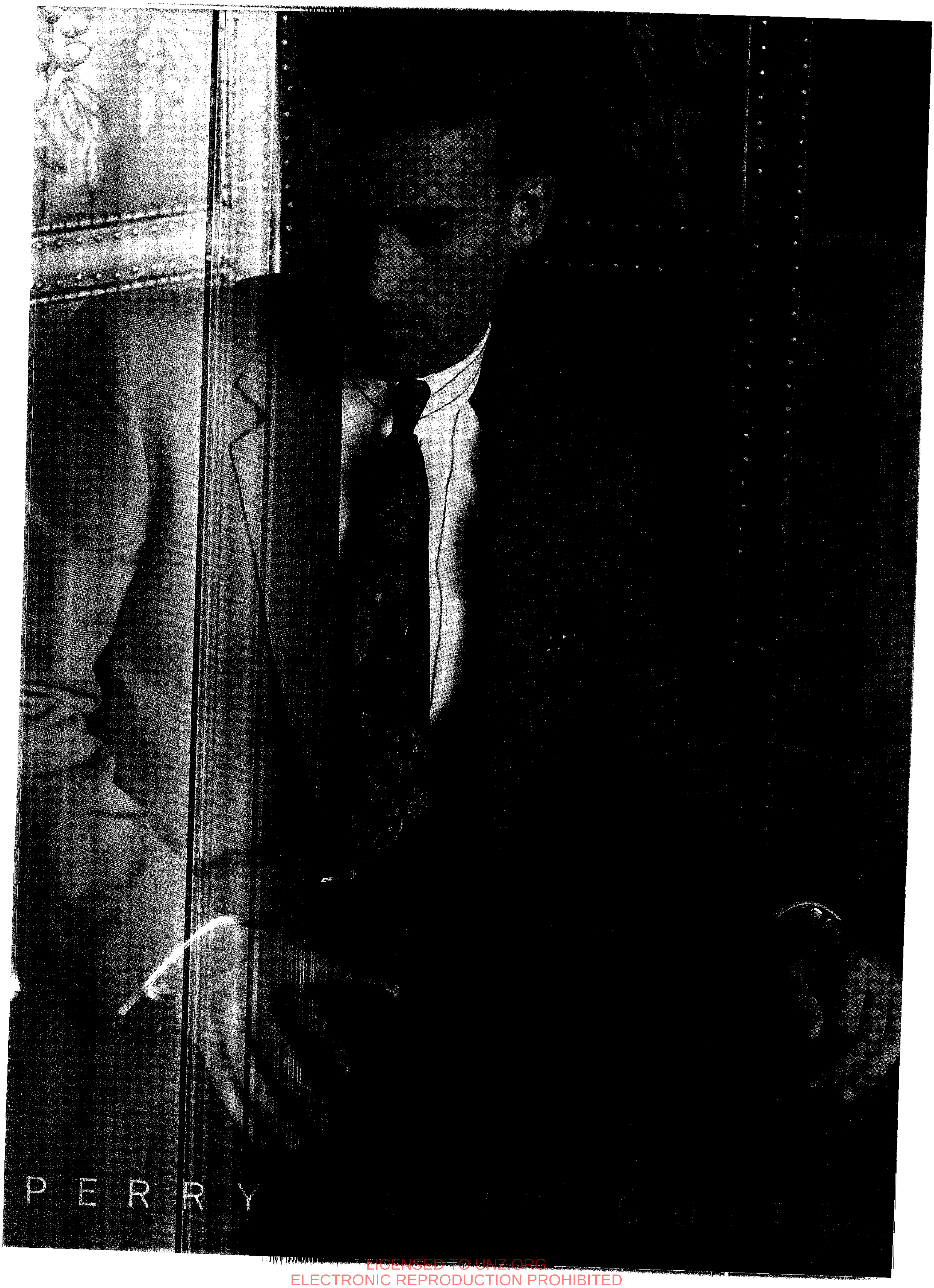
THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc., 20 W. 43rd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10036; Steven T. Florio, president and chief executive officer; Ruth A. Diem, vice-president and human resources director; Frank Mustacato, vice-president and circulation director; Virginia L. Jespersen, vice-president and general manager/cfo; Lynn Guthrie Heiler, vice-president and associate publisher; Matthew D. Roberts, vice-president and marketing director; Pamela H. Older, vice-president and director of manufacturing; Martha Kaplan, vice-president. Branch advertising offices: 111 East Wacker Drive, Chicago, Ill. 60601; 41 Osgood Place, San Francisco, Calif. 94133; Suite 1460, 5900 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90036; 67½ Chestnut St., Boston, Mass. 02108; 19 South Audley St., London, W1Y 5DN. Metropolitan Publishers Representatives: 3017 Piedmont Road, NE, Atlanta, Ga. 30305; 2500 So. Dixie Highway, Miami, Fla. 33133; 3016 Mason Place, Tampa, Fla. 33629; 3 Church St., Suite 503, Toronto, Canada. M5E 1M2. Carol Orr & Co., Publishers Representative: 3300 Oak Lawn, Suite 500, Dallas, Tx. 75219. Vol. LXVII, No. 2, March 4, 1991. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Canadian goods and services tax registration number R123242885. © 1991 by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc., in the United States and Canada. All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of The New Yorker. The magazine's name, logo, and various titles and headings herein have been registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Printed in U.S.A. Subscription rates: In U.S. and possessions, one year, $32.00; two years, $52.00. In Canada, one year, $56.00. Other foreign, one year, $66.00, payable in advance.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The New Yorker, Box 56447, Boulder, Colorado 80322.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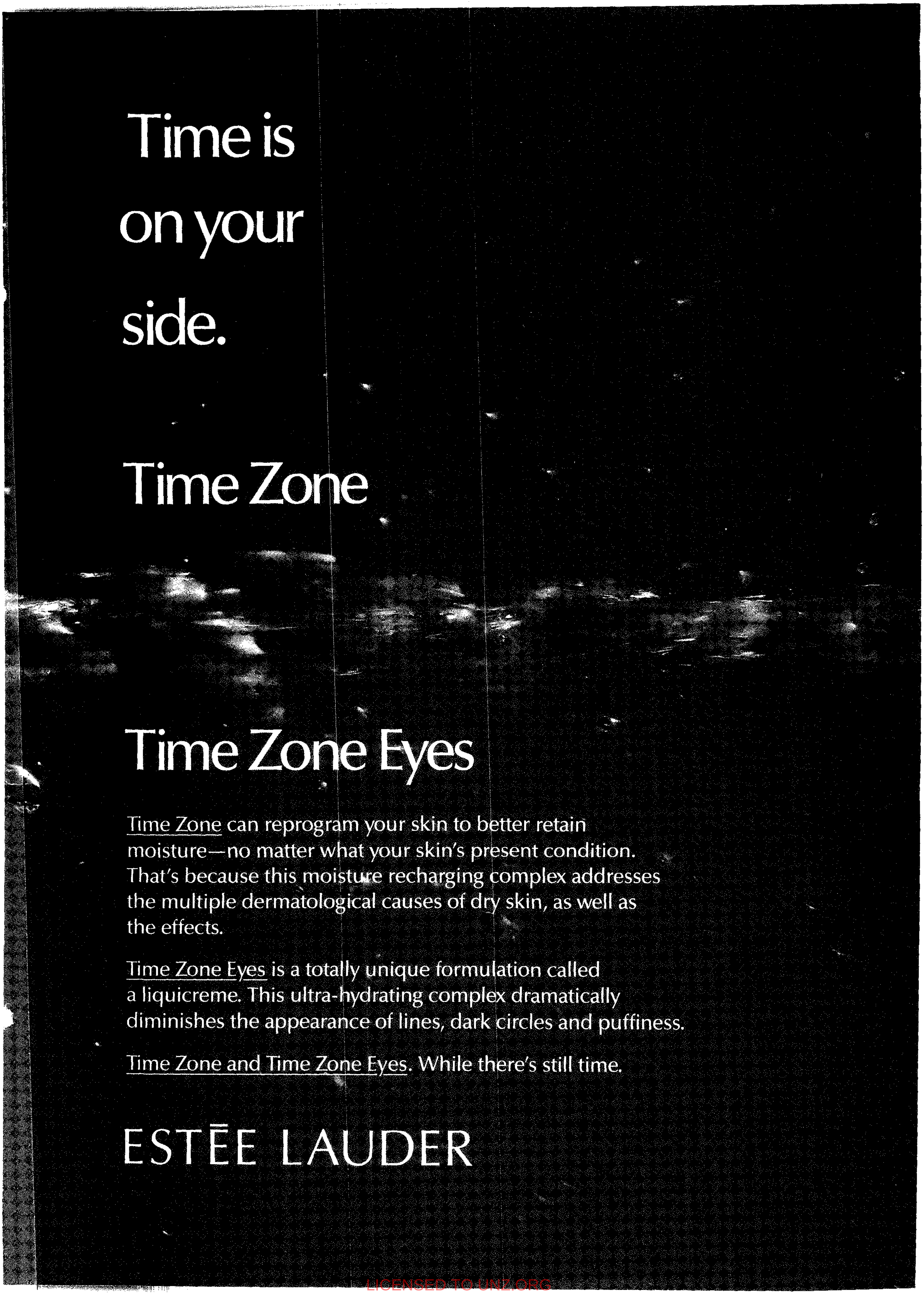

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

Eileen Atkins in "A Room of One's Own"

THE THEATRE

WHEN the General Cinema Corporation made an offer to buy Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in January, a colleague of ours, thinking no doubt of the mounds of debt that would be acquired in the bargain, asked "Why?" We had a ready answer: "Virginia Woolf." As the American publisher of that writer's backlist, Harcourt sells tens of thousands of copies of her books each year; the publisher, in effect, superintends Bloomsbury's legacy in this country. It's a legacy that has lost some of its lustre in recent years. Neoconservative commentators have attacked the cohort's hedonism and lack of productivity relative to Victorian forebears. Mainstream critics have whittled away at these writers' reputation for technical advance. And renegades have complained about the group's snobbery; Mrs. Woolf's novel "Orlando," Angela Carter announced recently on British television, is "a slobbering valentine to a member of the upper classes."

The quarter from whose slights Mrs. Woolf, if not Bloomsbury, had seemed immune was the feminist one. "A Room of One's Own," the novelist's 1929 adaptation of lectures she gave to undergraduates at Cambridge University's Newnham and Girton colleges, has long been a favorite of women's-studies instructors. Over the past few years, however, many feminist scholars have seemed to find Mrs. Woolf's rambling talks on the subject of women and fiction less incisive than they used to. For example, her assertion that no female "wrote a word of that extraordinary literature" of the Elizabethans now simply rings false, given the recent discovery and dissemination of numerous texts from the period written by women.

Interestingly, none of the recent assaults against the volume seem to have affected its popularity. (American sales alone last year reached seventy thousand.) Nor were they sufficient to compel Londoners to stay away from Patrick Garland's stage adaptation of the classic last year. The production, which stars Eileen Atkins and begins previews this Thursday at the Lamb's Theatre, may find similar success here.

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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

THE BIG LOVE—Tracey Ullman stars in a comedy by Brooke Allen and Jay Presson Allen. It is based on Florence Aadland and Tedd Thomey's 1961 book about an affair that Aadland's teen-age daughter had with Errol Flynn. Previews through March 2. Opens March 3 at 7. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

CIRCLE REPERTORY COMPANY—Jon Polito and Peter Riegert star in **ROAD TO NIRVANA,** a satire by Arthur Kopit. Previews through March 2. Opens March 3 at 7:30. (99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100.)

A FIERCE ATTACHMENT—Tovah Feldshuh in a one-woman play written by Edward M. Cohen and based on Vivian Gornick's memoir of the same name. Previews Feb. 26-27. Opens Feb. 28 at 8. (Jewish Repertory Theatre, 344 E. 14th St. 505-2667.)

THE HAUNTED HOST—Harvey Fierstein and Jason Workman in a quick revival of Robert Patrick's 1964 comedy. Opens March 1 at 8, and runs through March 17. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

HENRY IV, PARTS I AND II—The sixteenth and seventeenth plays in the Public's Shakespeare Marathon, both directed by JoAnne Akalaitis, will run in repertory through March 31. Part I opens Feb. 26 at 6:30; Part II opens Feb. 27 at 8. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

I CAN GET IT FOR YOU WHOLESALE—A revival of the 1962 Jerome Weidman–Harold Rome musical, presented by the American Jewish Theatre. In previews. (Susan Bloch, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

THE LEARNED LADIES—The Molière work, in a new translation by Freyda Thomas. Featuring Jean Stapleton. Previews through March 5. Opens March 6 at 7. (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

LIFE DURING WARTIME—A dark comedy by Keith Reddin, which had its première last year at the La Jolla Playhouse, in San Diego. The cast includes Leslie Lyles, Bruce Norris, W. H. Macy, and Welker White. Previews through March 3. Opens March 5 at 8. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

MOSCOW STUDIO-THEATRE—Presenting the first of two shows in a brief engagement: **A TEACHER OF RUSSIAN,** by Aleksandr Buravsky, March 5-7 at 8. (Triplex, 199 Chambers St. 618-1980.)

OCCASIONAL GRACE—A "site-specific" production, presented by the En Garde Arts company. Written by Michael Ahn, Neena Beber, Magdalia Cruz, and Talvin Wilks, with music by Amina Claudine Myers. Previews Feb. 27-March 1. Opens March 2 at 8. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. For information about tickets, call 274-8123.)

A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN—Patrick Garland's adaptation of the Virginia Woolf classic, starring Eileen Atkins. The show is imported from London; Mr. Garland directed. Previews Feb. 28-March 3. Opens March 4 at 7:30. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

THE SPEED OF DARKNESS—Len Cariou and Stephen Lang have the leads in a play by Steve Tesich. Directed by Robert Falls. Also with Lisa Eichhorn. Previews through Feb. 27. Opens Feb. 28 at 6:45. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE SUBSTANCE OF FIRE—A play by Jon Robin Baitz, with Patrick Breen, Sarah Jessica Parker, Ron Rifkin, Jon Tenney, and Maria Tucci. Previews begin March 1. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

RECENTLY OPENED

ABSENT FRIENDS—Alan Ayckbourn's almost continuously funny comedy, with melancholy undertones, about three English suburban couples who give a tea for an old friend whose fiancée has recently drowned. As the action proceeds, we come to realize that he is in better shape, emotionally speaking, than anyone present. The performance, under Lynne Meadow's direction, is all any playwright could wish for. Peter Frechette is the bereaved; Brenda Blethyn is the hostess; and Ellen Parker, Gillian Anderson, David Purdham, and John Curless are among the consolers. Distinguished setting and costumes by John Lee Beatty and Jane Greenwood. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/25/91.) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Closes March 17.)

LA BÊTE—Why is this mock-seventeenth-century didactic comedy so titled? Why is it set where and when it is, unless to give its author, David Hirson, who has a flair for doggerel, a chance to write in rhymed couplets? Why does it exist at all, except to give Andrew Lloyd Webber (who co-produced, along with Stuart Ostrow) another opportunity to turn poetry into a commodity à la "Cats"? Finally, why doesn't somebody please produce a real seventeenth-century didactic comedy, so that actors like Michael Cumpsty, James Greene, and Dylan Baker (who appear here) might have something substantial to work with? (2/25/91) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 246-0220.)

BUDDY: THE BUDDY HOLLY STORY—Anyone who thinks that rock and roll lives on had better steer clear of this ersatz docu-musical about the life of Buddy Holly. (11/19/90) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

CAMILLE, A TEARJERKER—Everett Quinton and the late Charles Ludlam are both at their best in this revival of Mr. Ludlam's 1973 spoof, which gives Mr. Quinton a chance to "play the whore" on a grand scale. (Charles Ludlam Theatre, 1 Sheridan Square. 691-2271. Closes March 3.)

CANDIDA—Laurie Kennedy has the title role in this production of Shaw's play. Presented by the Riverside Shakespeare Company. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

CARREÑO—A show based on the life of Teresa Carreño, the Venezuelan composer, pianist, conductor, and singer. Written and performed by Pamela Ross and directed by Gene Frankel. Most performances are in English; a few are in Spanish. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

DAUGHERTY & FIELD OFF-BROADWAY—The cabaret team of Bill Daugherty and Robin Field in a revue of swing and show tunes. (Double Image, 15 Vandam St. 924-1120.)

THE FEVER—A one-man play written by, and starring, Wallace Shawn. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103. Feb. 26-March 3. . . . ¶ Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. March 4-10.)

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF—The Israeli actor Topol makes a commanding Tevye—the best of all of them—in this production, which falls somewhere between revival and facsimile. The songs are by Bock and Harnick; the dances and direction are re-created from the Jerome Robbins originals; and the costumes are from the Patricia Zipprodt originals. (12/3/90) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 586-6510.)

JACKIE MASON: BRAND NEW—The comedian brings his one-man show to Broadway again. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 246-0102.)

JEAN COCTEAU REPERTORY—Presenting three plays in rotating repertory: Ibsen's **WHEN WE DEAD AWAKEN** and a double bill of Georg Büchner's **WOYZECK** and **LEONCE AND LENA,** which were adapted by Eric Bentley. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

JUBA—A musical based on the life of the dancer William Henry (Juba) Lane. The book and lyrics are by Wendy Lamb and the score is by Russell Walden. Kevin Ramsey has the title role. Presented by AMAS Musical Theatre and directed by Shaldon Epps. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 279-4200. Closes March 10.)

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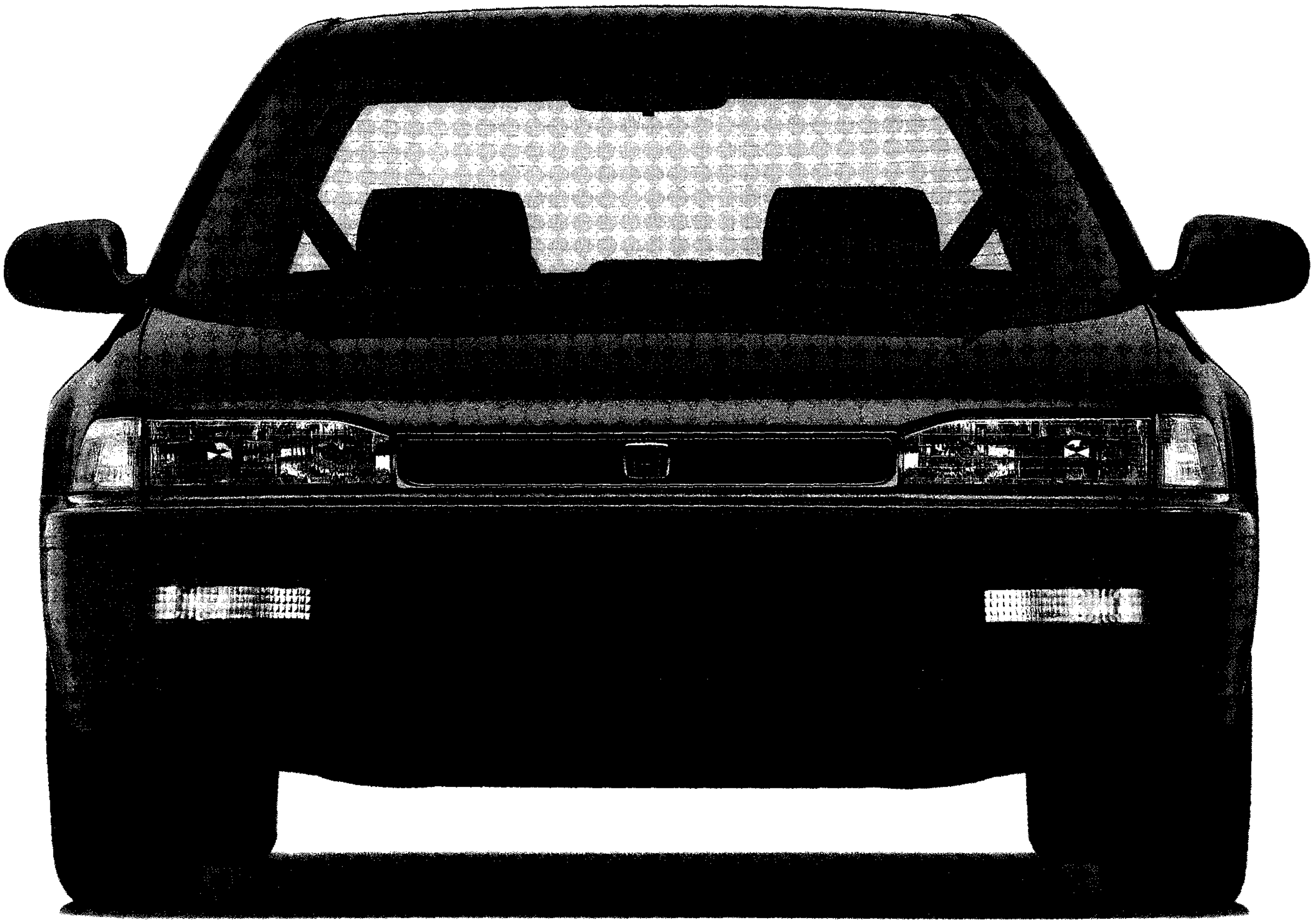

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THE THEATRE—Cont'd

Light Shining in Buckinghamshire—A 1976 play by Caryl Churchill, presented by New York Theatre Workshop. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 279-4200. Closes March 10.)

Lost in Yonkers—Neil Simon's new play, with Irene Worth, Mercedes Ruehl, and Kevin Spacey; directed by Gene Saks. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.)

Lyndon—Lyndon Johnson, in the person of Laurence Luckinbill, wanders around the Oval Office reviewing (and justifying) his political career. He is convincing most of the time, both dramatically and historically, and this one-man show is more interesting than most. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038. Closes March 3.)

Mambo Mouth—John Leguizamo's one-man show, in which he portrays seven Hispanic characters. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

Manhattan Punch Line—Presenting a festival of new one-act comedies. Program A: "Variations on the Death of Trotsky," by David Ives; "Gorgo's Mother," by Laurence Klavan; "Gangster Apparel," by Richard Vetere; and "Stay Carl Stay," by Peter Tolan. . . . ¶ Program B: "The Experts," by Bill Bozzone; "Foreplay," by David Ives; "The Staged Reading," by Michael Panes; "Mailman," by Matthew Carnahan; and "The Christmas Rules," by Craig Wright. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes March 10.)

Mule Bone—This play with music, a collaboration between Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes, was written in 1930, during the Harlem Renaissance, but was never produced, because the authors quarrelled. The setting is a small Florida town with an exclusively black population. The first act, brimming with episodes (and humor and characters), is just this side of chaos, but the second act tells a clear story about the trial of a young man who knocks out his best friend with a mule bone. Under the strong direction of Michael Schultz, every moment is lively. The members of the company represent the cream of black theatre over the past twenty years or so. Taj Mahal was both composer and arranger. (2/25/91) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Once on This Island—A musical by Lynn Ahrens (book and lyrics) and Stephen Flaherty (score), which is based on Rosa Guy's 1985 novel, "My Love, My Love." (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Pearl Theatre Company—Presenting a double bill of one-acts by Arthur Schnitzler: **countess mitzi** and **the farewell supper.** (125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708.)

Remembrance—A play by Graham Reid, with Aideen O'Kelly, Henry J. Quinn, John Finn, and others. (Irish Arts Theatre, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318.)

Romeo and Juliet—A brawling, rackety production in which many of the words go by the board and many of the characters are blurred. Exceptions must be made of Miriam Healy-Louie, a true Juliet, who is fresh, beautiful, ardent, and funny, and of Lynnda Ferguson as Lady Capulet, Peggy Pope as the nurse, and Omar Carter as Benvolio. The misbegotten performance was directed by Bill Alexander, on temporary loan from the Royal Shakespeare Company. (Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes March 3.)

Shadowlands—William Nicholson's vulgar stage adaptation of the beautiful television film about C. S. Lewis that he wrote for the BBC is essentially a tourist trap. It Broadwayizes everything that in the movie was subtle or sincere. Directed by Elijah Moshinsky; with Nigel Hawthorne and Jane Alexander. (11/26/90) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-4099.)

The Sum of Us—David Stevens' poignant comedy about how hard it is for parents and children to break free of each other (particularly if they get on too well) is set in present-day Australia. Depending on how you look at it, the play is either very dear and rather flawed or rather dear and very flawed, but cast and direction are both excellent. (11/5/90) (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020.)

Taking Steps—A 1979 comedy by the British playwright Alan Ayckbourn. With Christopher Benjamin, Bill Buell, Jonathan Hogan, Spike McClure, Pippa Pearthree, and Jane Summerhays. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

An Unfinished Song—A musical with a book, a score, and lyrics by James J. Mellon. Directed by Simon Levy. (Provincetown, 133 Macdougal St. 477-5048.)

When Lightning Strikes Twice—A double bill of plays by H. M. Koutoukas: "Awful People Are Coming Over So We Must Be Pretending to Be Hard at Work and Hope They Will Go Away" and "Only a Countess May Dance When She's Crazy." With Everett Quinton. (Charles Ludlam Theatre, 1 Sheridan Square. 691-2271. Closes Feb. 28.)

LONG RUNS

aspects of love: Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest extravaganza, based on David Garnett's frail 1955 novel of the same title, aspires to good taste and sophistication (it's about artists and theatre folk rather than cats or trains) but ends up being a monument to vulgarity. The combination of Garnett's triviality and Lloyd Webber's pretentiousness produces something so empty it implodes. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **cats:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.) . . . **city of angels:** Larry Gelbart, dramatist; Cy Coleman, composer; Billy Byers, arranger; and Michael Blakemore, director, are all in top form in this sharp, jokey musical satire about Hollywood in the forties. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 246-0102.) . . . **the fantasticks:** The longest-running long run will celebrate its thirty-first birthday in May. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.) . . . **forbidden broadway 1991:** A source of continual merriment, this revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it, and wrote the witty, barbed lyrics. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.) . . . **forever plaid:** Stuart Ross's loving tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.) . . . **grand hotel:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show, but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 246-0102.) . . . **les misérables:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.) . . . **nunsense:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.) . . . **other people's money:** Jerry Sterner's comedy about a New York corporate raider's attempt to take over a decorous New England business maintains its suspense from beginning to end. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.) . . . **the phantom of the opera:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **prelude to a kiss:** Craig Lucas's entertaining romantic comedy slips into fantasy when an old man kisses a bride at her wedding. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 944-9450.) . . . **the rothschilds:** The 1970 musical by Jerry Bock, Sheldon Harnick, and Sherman Yellen. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.) . . . **six degrees of separation:** You're best off knowing nothing about the new John Guare play other than that it represents a perfect meeting of the playwright, director Jerry Zaks, and actress Stockard Channing. Out of a true story—one apparently about celebrity and Good Samaritanism—Guare has fashioned a wistful comedy about race, class, money, imagination, collective conscience, individual psyche, and the impulse toward art. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.) . . . **smoke on the mountain:** This loving satire of old-time gospel music, set in 1938, is perfectly delightful. Written by Connie Ray, it re-creates a Saturday-night service at a small church in rural North Carolina, where a family of gospel singers have been invited to appear. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

DANCE

"Aeros," a 1990 video by Burt Barr, tracks a dance called "Astral Convertible," which Trisha Brown made for nine members of her company in 1989. We glimpse the work in rehearsal and in performance—on stages in Florida, in France, and in the Soviet Union during the Brown company's tour there a season or two ago. We also see backstage preparations, picturesque views of Moscow rooftops and statuary, and, at one point, Ms. Brown herself performing in a recent revival of an early, rather stationary solo called "Homemade." During this sequence, the dancer has strapped a film projector around her torso, with its lens aimed at an upstage screen. The film projected there is of a young Trisha Brown dancing "Homemade" in 1966, the year of its composition. The "Aeros" video suggests that "Astral Convertible" and "Homemade" are somehow linked, though whether the model of the relationship is that of a pearl and a grain of sand or that of a rocket ship and a paper airplane remains unclear.

For much of her career, Ms. Brown has matter-of-factly been mixing up human beings and technology. The results may look unruffled (like the time she managed to walk up the side of a building), but they often harbor the potential for major stress. Robert Rauschenberg, who designed the space-age-looking "visual presentation" of "Astral Convertible," embodies this kind of deceptive calm, or so "Aeros" suggests. Mr. Rauschenberg was responsible for the luminous costumes, the variable lighting, and the set, which consists of eight steel towers that support the music system. (The "score," by Richard Landry, is activated whenever the dancers break through beams of light that shine into photoelectric eyes.) In the video, Mr. Rauschenberg's chats with Ms. Brown are soft-spoken sparring matches about technicalities.

When "Astral Convertible" was given its New York première, many observers paid attention to the towers and the idea of an interface between performers and machines. Mr. Barr's video italicizes a deeper emotional current, which is most vividly dramatized through Ms. Brown's movement-engineering, especially in male-female partnerships. Mr. Barr also gives consideration to Mr. Landry's score, although its virtues as electronically produced art emerge through a process of elimination. It is not the sound of someone hosing down a double-hung window or the solid-state chirping of crickets: it is indeterminate music. The video's title, "Aeros," seems to be a portmanteau word, combining Eros (the god of love) and the prefix "aero" (of or relating to aircraft).

The Trisha Brown Company will perform eleven of Ms. Brown's works—including "Astral Convertible" and "Homemade"—on March 5-10 at City Center. "Aeros" is available for purchase from the Brown company's office.

Joffrey Ballet—Opening performances of a three-week engagement, which will run through March 17. Feb. 26 at 7:30: "Suite Saint-Saëns," "Sea Shadow," "Tarantella," and "The Green Table." . . . ¶ Feb. 27 at 8: "Cotillon," "Lacrymosa" (New York première), "L'Air d'Esprit," and "Trinity." . . . ¶ Feb. 28 at 8: "Les Noces," "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," and "Le Sacre du Printemps." . . . ¶ March 1 at 8: "Suite Saint-Saëns," "Lila" (company première), "L'Air d'Esprit," and "The Green Table." . . . ¶ March 2 at 8: "Cotillon," "Lacrymosa," "L'Air d'Esprit," and "Trinity." . . . ¶ March 3 at 2: "Cotillon," "Lila," "Tarantella," and "The Green Table." . . . ¶ March 3 at 7:30: "Les Noces," "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," and "Le Sacre du Printemps." . . . ¶ March 5 at 7:30: The premières of "Empyrean Dances," "Runaway Train," and "Panoramagram," and a revival of "Postcards." (A benefit performance; for information about tickets, call 265-7300.) . . . ¶ March 6 at 8: "Les Noces," "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," and "Le Sacre du Printemps." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Feld Ballets/NY—Feb. 26 and Feb. 28 at 8: "Common Ground," "Savage Glance," "Ion," and "Fauna." . . . ¶ Feb. 27 at 8: "Contra Pose," "Fauna," "Kore," and "Skara Brae." . . . ¶ March 1 and March 5 at 8: "Contra Pose," "At Midnight," and "Embraced Waltzes." . . . ¶ March 2 at 8: "Consort," "Charmed Lives," "Ion," and "Intermezzo No. 1." . . . ¶ March 3 at 2: "Meadowlark," "A Footstep of Air," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶ March 3 at 7:30: "Ah Scarlatti," "Charmed Lives," "Ion," and "Common Ground." . . . ¶ March 6 at 8: "Ah Scarlatti," "Fauna," "Shadow's Breath," and "The Jig Is Up." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through March 10.)

Trisha Brown Company—Opening performances of a one-week engagement, which will run through March 10. March 5 at 7:30: "Accumulation," "Newark," "Homemade," and the New York première of "Foray Forêt." . . . ¶ March 6 at 8: "Set and Reset," "Line Up," and "Astral Convertible." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.) . . . **NOTE:** Ms. Brown will give a short talk about her work on Feb. 28 at 7:30, in City Center's fourth-floor studio. For information about tickets, call the box-office number, above.

Satya Narayana Charka Kathak Dance Company—A troupe of ten dancers and several musicians. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. March 2 at 8.)

Tyler Walters in Joffrey Ballet's "The Green Table"

NIGHT LIFE

SOME jazz drummers have so much firepower that they pound other musicians into submission. Others are dutiful timekeepers who reserve their flash for solos. Some take a sadistic pleasure in driving a band to its brink, as if testing horses, while others can barely keep pace themselves. The drummer Arthur Taylor, who recently spent a week at Condon's, is authoritative without being a bully. Although he works with some topnotch musicians—the saxophonists Vincent Herring and Willie Williams, the pianist Larry Willis, and the bassist Tyler Mitchell—he's the center of attention, because he interprets everything that's happening on the bandstand. When a band member takes a solo, Taylor stays with him at every turn, commenting, challenging, embellishing. If the soloist plays against the beat, Taylor might double him, playing the same cross-rhythm at twice the speed. When the soloist returns to straight time, Taylor will meet him there on the same beat and, before the soloist can gather his thoughts, throw out a new idea. Then, in the middle of this game of tag, he'll shift gears and pick up on the rhythm section. Like a good conductor, he keeps tabs on everyone at once.

Taylor also has a great sense of tone, and he makes use of the wide variety of sounds a drum kit can get. His cymbals never have that monotonous, heavy-rain sound: he keeps moving around, varying force and texture. On the high hat he'll make surprise attacks, smacking it with a stick and then closing it, or he'll toss off a sixteenth-note run with his left foot. His toms, which are tuned low, can sound anywhere from subtle to obliterating. Taylor will often go through an entire set without taking a solo—instead he concentrates on making the band more exciting. And you can sense the other musicians' pleasure in playing with him: while it must be a little unnerving to have him on your trail, it must also be a welcome challenge.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Singer **JEFF HARNAR,** who's offering two new shows through March 2 in the woody nook known as the Oak Room, has been known to sing one number with a quiet, gentle lilt, then drop his voice down low and belt out the next with a vibrato that could shake a diploma off a wall. His performances usually include just the right amount of bad jokes and over-the-top theatrics, as well as some musical surprises. Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen, Harnar dedicates his shows to the "1959 Broadway Songbook." (He was born that year.) Fridays and Saturdays at eleven-fifteen, he sings Cole Porter. **SALLY ANN HOWES** begins work on March 5. Dining.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—It's everything a cabaret should be: sleek, elegant, intimate, and slightly decadent. It also offers something that other cabarets do not: tapas, which come from the excellent Spanish restaurant adjoining the club. The wonderfully campy singer-accordionist **PHOEBE LÉGÈRE,** who starts up on Feb. 26 with a program of Porter, Coward, Piaf, and Brel, describes her new show as an "upbeat, happy, dazzling concept show with sequins, feathers, tap dancing, and emotion." Shows start at nine Tuesdays through Saturdays, and at seven on Sundays.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—Many musicians who visit this Upper West Side jazz house are honored—if that's the word—by having their portraits done, "in concert," by the house artist. These impressionistic renderings round out a glossy décor that includes flying-saucer light fixtures, burgundy velvet drapes, and some neon wading birds. The **ADAM MAKOWICZ** trio is at work through Feb. 28; **TERENCE BLANCHARD** comes in March 1-2. Music from nine. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—This blue-on-blue club is an institution and it knows it: how many other clubs sell their own belt buckles? The **ELIANE ELIAS** trio and **JOYCE** and her quartet share the bandstand Feb. 26-March 3. **ELVIN** and **HANK JONES,** the renowned brothers from Pontiac, Michigan, will be leading their respective ensembles the week beginning March 5. Elvin, a drummer, was a member of one of John Coltrane's most illustrious groups; Hank, a pianist, has a roster of famous associates: Ella Fitzgerald, Charlie Parker, Lester Young, and so on. Music from nine. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A neighborhood bar where, if your neighbors coöperate, you can hear the beautiful, singular sound of musicians thinking. Pianist **JOANNE BRACKEEN** and bassist **CECIL MC BEE** work out through March 2. Pianist and singer **FREDDY COLE,** Nat's brother, chairs a trio beginning March 4. Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

Café Sin-é, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—An unpretentious storefront café devoted to such things as Irish stew and the *Irish Times*. There's no stage per se, but bohemian musicians gather around a piano and work up some nice, wistful sets while bohemian patrons sit writing in journals, rolling cigarettes, or lingering over one of the two varieties of beer sold here: Budweiser and Rolling Rock. Sin-é means "That's it" in Gaelic and is *not* Sinéad O'Connor's nickname. The café is a nice place to while away an hour, and you never know who'll turn up and tune up. Music generally begins at about eight-thirty.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pastel uptown spa known as the Café Carlyle is home to the coolly elegant **KAREN AKERS,** who's singing a program of musical-theatre numbers, as well as standards by Rodgers and Hart, Bernstein, and Sondheim. Sets Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans' Bar, **KURT WIETING** presides at the piano from nine-forty-five Tuesdays through Saturdays.

Cat Club, 76 E. 13th St. (505-0090)—Bell-bottoms and peace signs aren't the only nostalgia craze in town: at the Cat Club on Sunday nights, the nineteen-thirties are in vogue. On other nights of the week, the club attracts a scruffy leather-and-lace crowd, but Sundays belong to the Swing Dance Society, whose passion is the Lindy Hop. The dancers are young and old, graceful and flat-footed; the drink of choice is the Swing Dance Punch; and the staff looks alternately bemused and bewildered by the genteel crowd. **BOB JANUARY** and the Satin Swing Orchestra perform on March 3. Music from eight to midnight.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—The city's most famed rock club, a dark, narrow cave with neon-beer-sign stalactites and ancestral graffiti, is part sacred burial ground and part historic landmark, but it hasn't succumbed to nostalgia: new and used bands of every stripe continue to pass through nightly. **BAND OF SUSANS** are here on March 1, and **TRASH CAN SINATRAS** perform on March 6. Music from eight-thirty Sundays through Thursdays, and from nine-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

Condon's, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—In the shadow of the Zeckendorf Towers sits this stucco-walled grotto, whose intimate scale makes it a fine spot for jazz. **JIMMY WITHERSPOON,** a veteran bluesman with a rumbling, rough-edged voice and a sardonic wit, is in evidence Feb. 26-March 3, along with the organist **RICHARD (GROOVE) HOLMES.** Tenor-sax man **CLIFFORD JORDAN** and his quintet commence on March 5. Music after nine.

Eagle Tavern, 355 W. 14th St. (924-0275)—An Irish bar, way out on the Western edge of town, where the great potholed boulevards turn to cobblestones, and the world across the Hudson flashes its come-hither signs. The back room has Hibernian sounds on Fridays and bluegrass on Saturdays. Sets at nine and eleven.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—Through the iffy-looking side door, down the famous fun-house tunnel that's lined with mirrors and corrugated tin, and down a short flight of stairs, you'll find this softly lit, low-ceilinged, roughly Manhattan-shaped jazz preserve. **JON HENDRICKS,** a vocalist who formed the popular singing group Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross in the late fifties, is in action Feb. 26-March 3. The week

NIGHT LIFE–Cont'd

beginning March 5 belongs to **ANITA O'DAY**, an assured jazz vocalist, scat pro, and salty comedienne who rose to fame with Gene Krupa's big band in the forties. Ms. O'Day drifted out of the jazz world after her success with Krupa, and recently made a critically acclaimed comeback. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL**, the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

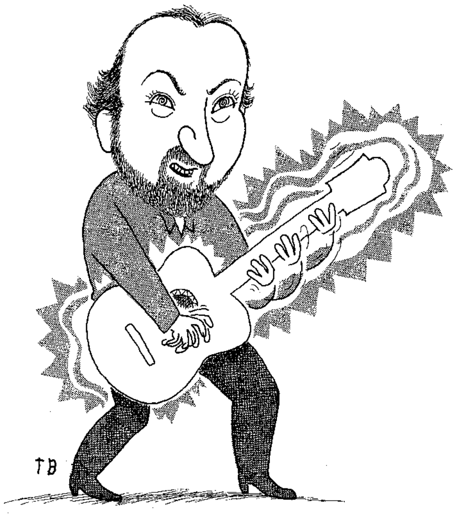
Fortune Garden Pavilion, 209 E. 49th St. (753-0101)—At this posh-looking two-floor Chinese restaurant, tucked into a midtown skyscraper, you'll find a lot of businessmen and a lot of hanging plants. In the middle of the main dining room, you'll also find a Steinway grand, which belongs to **HERMAN FOSTER** Feb. 26-March 3; **JON BURR** is on bass. When Dorothy Donegan plays here, she has been known to stand up at the piano and dance. Now the club is offering an act to go her one better. For two weeks beginning March 5, **HAROLD NICHOLAS**, who is half of the famed tap-dancing team the Nicholas Brothers, will be practicing his art in the dining room (he also sings), on a puny dance floor that the management is laying down especially for him. He'll be backed up by pianist Don Freidman and bassist Earl May. Sets begin at six-thirty every night.

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—A recent addition to the little-heralded Upper East Side club scene. Don't go expecting to be sprayed with soapy water and massaged by large brushes: the fluorescent sign outside is the only car-wash reference. Inside, the place looks like an adman's idea of a blues bar. **BO DIDDLEY, JR.**, a nephew of the real item, appears March 1-2, along with the Black Widow Band. Music from nine.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—A good sound system, cheap drinks, and a regular-guy atmosphere make this restaurant-bar, home of the Hoboken Sound and of the phrase "jangly guitars," a popular hangout for musicians and their followers. **RICHARD THOMPSON** gives a solo acoustic set on March 1.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—A mid-Manhattan pub for well-heeled gents and high-heeled ladies. It's not always easy to detect the music over the babble, but if you listen closely you should be able to hear singers **MARK MURPHY** and **SUE RANEY**, backed up by **BILL MAYS** at the piano. Sometimes you can catch Woody Allen playing the clarinet here on Mondays. Music starts every night at nine-fifteen.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A moondust-in-your-hair cabaret where a club soda costs, well, a *lot*. There are plenty of niceties if you're so inclined: an ear-popping express elevator in which you can mingle with the famous; tables scattered with plastic diamonds and sapphires; and rest-room attendants who hover near the sink asking, "Is the water too warm?" **ROSEMARY CLOONEY** continues through March 2. The singer, who took a long hiatus after her "White Christmas" days, made a comeback in the late seventies and has been going strong since. Her most recent album is a tribute to Rodgers, Hart, and Hammerstein, and, along with their material, she's likely to offer here work by other popular-song luminaries and maybe her early hit "Come On'a My House." Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.



Richard Thompson at Maxwell's

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—A place where a fella and a gal can put on the feedbag, get a little tight, and cut a rug. Mondays belong to Howie Wyeth's ragtime trio, Tuesdays to **VINCE GIORDANO'S** ensemble, Wednesdays to Stan Rubin's band, Fridays to the Tigertown Five Plus Two, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell's group. Bill Doggett and his outfit come in on Feb. 27. Bob Litwack's band, with saxophonist **SCOTT HAMILTON**, shares the bandstand with Stan Rubin's group on March 6. Music from six on Sundays, from eight-thirty Mondays through Thursdays, and from nine Fridays and Saturdays.

Ritz, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—The Manchester Sound hipsters **CHARLATANS UK**, who'll be performing here February 28, play swirling, atmospheric grooves that are full of *waca-waca* guitar work and enough organ for a Spencer Davis Group record or a day at the skating rink. Singer Tim Burgess has a rather thin, nasal voice that sometimes gets lost in the shuffle, but that didn't prevent the band from enjoying a long reign at the top of the college charts. It took another Manchester band, the Happy Mondays, to knock the Charlatans down from their perch. Shows begin at nine Sundays through Thursdays, and at eleven Fridays and Saturdays.

Russian Tea Room, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—Known for, among countless other things, a scene in "Manhattan" in which Woody Allen tries to teach his young son how to "score." Last fall, after a long slumber, the Tea Room's small, red-gold-and-green cabaret reopened. **SYLVIA SYMS** comes in on March 3. Shows Sundays at eight and, depending on demand, ten-thirty. Dining and, of course, drinking.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleeker St. (242-1785)—An itinerary stop for the international jazz groupies who, on any given night, can be seen roaming the streets of the Village. Up front, there's a glass-enclosed sidewalk café; in back is a larger room, with a pressed-tin ceiling, red brick, and more pinewood than a ski lodge. Pianist **JOHN HICKS'** All Stars are in sway through March 3; the **BOBBY HUTCHERSON** quartet starts up on March 5. The electrified big band of the late Gil Evans, now under the direction of his son, the trumpeter Miles Evans, is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

Time Café, 380 Lafayette St., entrance on Great Jones St. (533-7000)—The café's subterranean jazz annex, located around the block, is a newcomer to New York's night life. On the club's back wall one finds embarrassingly cheesy renderings of full-figured gals—the kind of artwork usually reserved for pinball machines. Otherwise, Time Café is an airy, convivial place with some comfy, diner-style booths, a fleet of IKEA-style tables and chairs, and jazz musicians on the bandstand every Friday and Saturday, beginning at ten.

Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. (475-5120)—A venerable jazz all-in-one. In the Terrace Bar, the **BENNY GREEN** trio is performing Feb. 27-28. Music from ten.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—This windowless, pie-shaped basement has an illustrious history that embraces everyone from Judy Holliday to Lenny Bruce, from Pete Seeger and Leadbelly to Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins. The décor is homey and a little faded, like an attic full of memorabilia. The precocious, hard-swinging **HARPER BROTHERS**, who seem to have studied their bebop records pretty carefully, are here Feb. 26-March 3. **MARK WHITFIELD'S** foursome begins an engagement on March 5. Mondays are reserved for the late Mel Lewis's big band. Sets at ten and midnight.

Zanzibar & Grill, 550 Third Ave., at 36th St. (779-0606)—A Murray Hill jazz resort, where the ceiling fans turn slowly, and the palm trees rustle tropically, and the jukebox contains Xavier Cugat and Perez Prado, and a waiter, delivering a plate of fried chicken and maple-pear corn bread to a customer, sings "It's suppertime" (to the tune of "Summertime"). Guitarist **RAY GOMEZ** and his band appear here Feb. 27-28; the **HIRAM BULLOCK** quartet performs March 1-2; and Jay Azzolina comes in March 5-6. Music starts at nine Sundays through Wednesdays, and at ten Thursdays through Saturdays.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. The food is Italian, the atmosphere is pastels and soft lights, and the musicians, who set up in a small room between the bar and the dining room, are first rate. Pianist **ROGER KELLAWAY** and bassist **JAY LEONHART** work out through March 2; guitarist **TAL FARLOW** and bassist **GARY MAZZAROPPI** get under way on March 4. Music from eight weeknights and Saturdays. Closed Sundays.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

Laura Belle was an odd choice for the party following the première of "Superstar," Chuck Workman's documentary about Andy Warhol. But Laura Belle (120 West 43rd Street) is an odd space to begin with. It's not the name, though it does conjure up images of Mame's awful Southern in-laws. Nor is it the location, exactly. Studio 54 was further uptown, and Le Jardin used to be right next door (though no one seems to know what used to be where Laura Belle is, and that's disconcerting, too. New Yorkers hate having holes in their social history). What's odd is the space itself, which looks like B. Altman's splendid restaurant, Charleston Gardens, modernized and reassembled, minus the weeping-willow murals and the old waitresses. It's grand and spacious, the marble is polished, the lighting is flattering. Money has been spent, so the place doesn't need to strain for false elegance, as Tatou does. But Laura Belle doesn't have an identity yet. The management has yet to decide what tack the slicked-back staff should take, so they're aloof when walking, friendly when spoken to, rarely pushy, but accommodating solely upon request—sort of like Gary's widow on "thirtysomething."

Andy might have loved the place *après-cinéma*, because he thrived on juxtaposition and relished fish-out-of-water situations, but not all his minions were as flexible. Because the club has a rarely used dance floor separating plush banquettes from the bar, those in repose were separated from bibulous stargazers by a gulf of buffed-up wood. But, then, not many of the Warholian *intimes* interviewed by Workman made it uptown. So instead of talking to Holly Woodlawn (who has the film's best line: "Who cares if Jane Fonda had her head in the toilet? So did everybody else") or Fran Lebowitz (who had the second-best quote: "Andy made fame more famous"), the press mysteriously engaged Sylvia Miles (for once a justifiable *celeb de nuit*), Carol Lynley, and the always teased, always one-leg-akimbo-when-photographed Sally Kirkland, once a Warhol cast member, now determined to make eerily regular appearances in the *Star's* "What People Are Wearing" page. "I'll bet they all went to some fabulous party someplace else," said one publicist. "There is no fabulous party someplace else," replied someone who'd know. "They probably just went home." Warhol has been gone only four years, but at Laura Belle it seemed like a very long time.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

Ice Theatre of New York—In "Dancing on Thin Ice," a half-hour program. The warmup is a virtuosic pairs number by the Russian skaters Vladimir and Yelena Bogollubov, in which each death-defying maneuver is triggered by a key change in the Albinoni adagio. The centerpiece, "Angel, Part II," commissioned by Dancing in the Streets, is a work for ten skaters by modern-dance choreographer Ann Carlson. Its ceremonial patterns offer no angels to the naked eye, but toward the end the cast lies down on the ice the way children do to make angels in snow. Each skater wears a handsome, ministerial black robe with touches of white and carries a huge, bitter-red flag. The music, Tibetan chanting, boils up from bedrock. (Lasker Rink, Central Park, mid-Park at 106th St. March 2 at 3. No tickets necessary.)

Brian Boitano and Katarina Witt—In an ice-skating revue. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. March 1 at 8.)

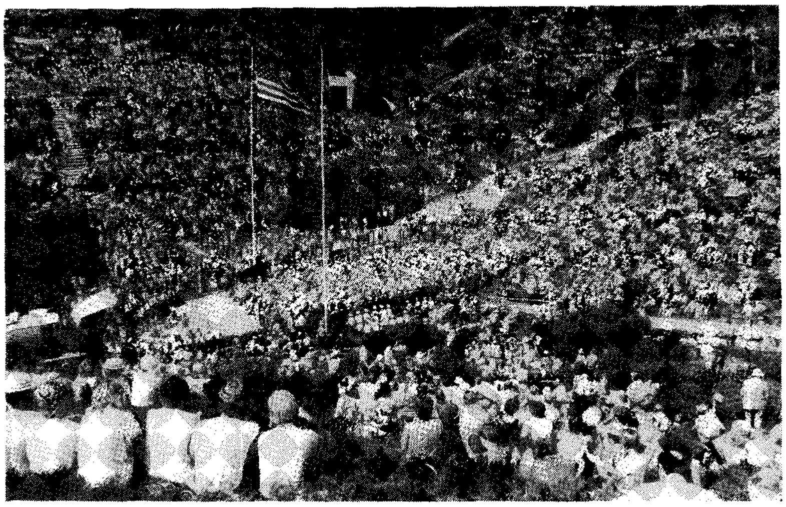
Brendan de Vallance—In a one-man show called "Misclocked." (Judson Memorial Church, 55 Washington Sq. S. March 2 at 8:30. No tickets necessary.)

P. S. 122—Feb. 28-March 3 at 8: Carmelita Tropicana and Uzi Parnes present their new work, "Carnaval." . . . ¶ Feb. 28-March 3 at 9:30: "Green Eyes Are Fine," a new performance work by the Otrabanda Company, written and directed by Roger Babb, with choreography by Rocky Bornstein and music by Blue Gene Tyranny. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

MATCHMAKER

Something on the order of a computer-dating system is now available to prospective cat owners. At this year's Cat Show at Madison Square Garden (March 1-3), the Sheba Selectacat video computer will be on display. The Selectacat asks ten basic multiple-choice questions of a prospective owner and, within minutes, proposes three breeds (we're not talking street cats here), from among twenty possibilities, that would likely result in a happy marriage. Then Selectacat offers a video profile of each breed. Dr. Myrna Milani, author of "The Body Language and Emotion of Cats," who will be standing by Selectacat to respond to questions about the "human-feline bond," said, "A lot of people just fall in love with a look. The idea of the program is to get people to see cats in terms of their own life style." Thus, the Selectacat asks such nitty-gritty questions as how much you are willing to spend on cat food and how often you would groom your cat. Even more penetrating are questions about how active you want your cat to be and what temperament you prefer. Dr. Milani said that cats generally fall into two broad categories: those that have been bred over a long period with close human contact and have developed more social, vocal dispositions (e.g., the Siamese); and "cat-cats," who are closer to the cat in nature and are more self-sufficient and aloof (e.g., the Maine Coon). "Our relationship with cats is more emotionally complex than with dogs," Dr. Milani said. "Dogs in many ways are four-legged, fur-covered human mirrors. Cats aren't. Their relationship with us is quite different—almost Freudian."

European by origin.
Danish by design.



Aalborg/North Jutland

Visitors from around the world have fallen in love with Aalborg and North Jutland—because they're like no other places in the world.

In Aalborg, you'll find the Abbey of the Holy Ghost that dates back half a millennia, the largest Viking burial ground in Scandinavia—and a nightlife that makes Aalborg one of the "swingingest" cities anywhere!

In Skagen, at the northern tip of North Jutland, two seas—the Cattegat and the Skagerrak—lap gently at mile after mile of wide, sandy beach.

And no trip to North Jutland is complete without seeing Rebild, a national park that is a gift from Danish-Americans to the people of Denmark. Each year, on the 4th of July, Rebild is the site of the largest celebration of America's independence held outside the United States.

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DENMARK

ART

THE iconography of Catholicism *à la Mexicaine* has been having an enormous impact on contemporary art, in work by Mexicans and non-Mexicans, Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Michael Tracy, who lives in Texas, right on the Rio Grande, and Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt, who lives right here, are perhaps the two most powerful American artists working steadily in this idiom. Aimee Morgana now joins their ranks with about a half dozen very impressive installation pieces that are on view at American Fine Arts and at the Pat Hearn gallery (40 and 39 Wooster Street; both through March 2). The artist—née Aimee Rankin into a patronymic system from which she has recently disassociated herself—chose her new moniker in part because of its reverberations of other Morgans and Morganas of world folklore (le Fay, Fata, etc.). She made a vivid impression under her old name some years back, in the East Village, with her peephole dioramas of erotically charged scenes.

Eros continues to be her main player. "The Order of Mystery," for instance, is a spectacularly macabre wall relief of a skeleton couple locked in an intimately affectionate embrace, while "Tears of Eros" features the skeleton of what looks to be a late-stage fetus. (This last work, given its title, suggests an interesting ambivalence on Morgana's part.) Sometimes Death alone makes the scene, for instance in "Survival Kit," with its beautiful carpet of gold-dusted autumn leaves and its enshrined Teddy bear. But Death comes most powerfully with his or her troublesome but livelier lover. "Room for Hope," which spotlights a big, black-velvet-covered bed, presents an enticing array of positively herculean condoms.

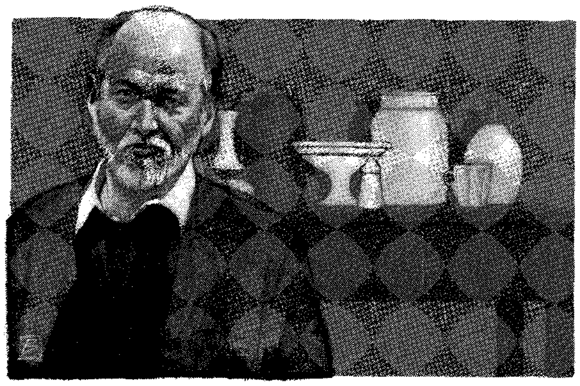
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—Nowhere in the art of this century is the Zeitgeist of utopian modernism more eloquently conveyed, in its ascendant vigor as well as its more twisted phases, than in the career of Kasimir Malevich (1878-1935), the *great Russian painter, designer, and visionary* aesthetician. A very atmospheric array of his classic Suprematist works is on view here, along with early, chunky Fauvist figures, and a number of intensely peculiar late paintings from the thirties. Even in the earliest paintings one can sense the pulsating, from-the-feet-up energy that, when mixed with the romance of Slavic folklore, has traditionally meant spirit in Russian art. It becomes quite clear, too, that Malevich's Suprematist works—paintings like the amazing "Black Square," "Black Cross," and "Black Circle," all from 1923, or his exquisite white-on-white compositions—are icons. Through March 24. . . . ¶ "Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840)." This small show, occupying two modestly proportioned rooms in the Lehman wing, consists of nine paintings, *most of them* small, and eleven works on paper, all lent by the Hermitage and Pushkin Museums, in the Soviet Union. The artist himself has at least until recently been the focus of primarily specialized interest. But it is really very easy to understand Friedrich's resurgence and growing popularity. Especially in the drawings—wonderfully moody, macabre depictions of owls and coffins and windows gaping out onto . . . what?—but also in a few paintings of same-sex couples staring out into the nothingness of sea or air, viewers will find haunted, luminous images of the early-Romantic set-piece vision of modern malaise and melancholia. Through March 31. . . . ¶ "The Fauve Landscape" brings together nearly a hundred and twenty-five paintings made between 1904 and 1908 by the principal Fauvists—Derain, Matisse, Braque, and their circle of friends. . . . ¶ "Théâtre de la Mode," in the Costume Institute, is a re-creation of a 1945 fashion exhibition that raised money for French war relief. Due to a fabric shortage, the couture, by such designers as Balenciaga, Lanvin, and Worth, was presented in miniature, on thirty-inch wire mannequins with ceramic heads. A hundred and seventy of the original dolls have been restored for this show. Through April 14. . . . ¶ The best works in the new Carroll and Milton Petrie European Sculpture Court are, in fact, in an annex—more an architectural afterthought—off to the side of the court, in the entrance to the Henry R. Kravis wing. There you will find Rodin's "Burghers of Calais," which is awkwardly sited but would look great anywhere; Bourdelle's amazing bronze statue of the sculptor Carpeaux; and a number of Maillols. Perhaps the finest works in the Petrie Court proper are the earliest: two very funny sculptures of a fruit-bearing Priapus and Flora that originally graced the entrance of the Villa Borghese, by Pietro Bernini, who was assisted by his soon-to-be-better-known young son, Gian Lorenzo. . . . ¶ "Albrecht Dürer: The Apocalypse" presents fifteen woodcuts of apocalyptic catastrophes, along with a small number of Gothic and Renaissance prints. Through March 17. . . . ¶ Photographs from the fifties and sixties, selected from the museum's collection. Among the artists shown are William Klein, Helen Levitt, Bill Brandt, and Lisette Model. Through March 17. . . . ¶ Seventeen Dutch-style cupboards crafted in New York and New Jersey between 1650 and 1800. Through April 7. . . . ¶ "Sacred Mountains in Chinese Art." Through March 31. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—The work of the Russian Constructivist Liubov Popova (1889-1924) is not as well known as that of her contemporaries Malevich, Rodchenko, and Tatlin, but this show—of fifty-five paintings, sixty works on paper, and a selection of theatre, book, and textile designs—should go far to redress that fact. Through April 23. . . . ¶ In the third of the museum's "Artist's Choice" series, Chuck Close, perhaps today's most enigmatic portraitist, has covered practically every available inch of the small gallery where "Christina's World" previously reigned with framed portraits from the museum's collection. While the very idea of the portrait seems antithetical to the Modern's mission, *Close has come up with an endless series of* amazing juxtapositions. Ignoring the museum's traditional curatorial divisions, which rank the importance of art according to medium, the artist has combined paintings, prints, sculptures, drawings, and photographs without any apparent judgment, with the possible exception of generally avoiding bona-fide masterpieces. Balthus's portrait of Miró and his daughter offers a special glimpse into both artists' psyches, while Wegman's double portrait of his weimaraner Fay Ray and the painter Ed Ruscha is indebted to puns for its logic. There are twentieth-century icons, such as Brassaï's fiercely enigmatic portrait of Genet, and self-portraits by Heckel, Maurer, and Beckmann, which offer views of more than you probably want to see. On one wall is Timothy Greenfield-Sanders' photograph of Cindy Sherman, today's chameleon self-portraitist; on another is Edward Weston's photo of Nahui Olin, a bizarre image that undoubtedly influenced Sherman. If you crouch down very low, you'll find a lithograph by Picasso of his children Paloma and Claude, done with the consummate personal mark—fingerprints, a technique picked up several decades later by the curator himself. Through March 19. . . . ¶ "Art of the Forties." Two hundred and seventy-five works, in all mediums, made during that decade. Through April 30. . . . ¶ Fourteen panoramic photographs of Antarctica, taken in 1989 by Stuart Klipper. Through March 19. . . . ¶ "British Photography from the Thatcher Years." Through April 30. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until autumn.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—An exhibition of more than a hundred drawings by Jasper Johns. The works span the artist's career and are in a variety of mediums, including pencil, charcoal, pastel, oil crayon, and watercolor. Through April 7. . . . ¶ A small show of twenty-nine more or less surrealistic works on paper made between the late nineteen-thirties and the recent past. There is a fast segue of drawings by figures, minor and major, of the New York School—from Gerome Kamrowski to Robert Motherwell, from Pavel Tchelitchew to Jackson Pollock. The aim of these artists was to liberate Surrealism from any hint of narrative or illustration. Biomorphic abstraction was the outcome then. And though we are offered works by mavericks such as Lee Bontecou (whose tondo drawing is a cross between Oskar Schlemmer and "The Road Warrior") and the altogether maniacal Jess, biomorphic abstraction—vintage 1989, by Carroll Dunham—is also the last note of this show. Through April 7. . . . ¶ Sixty paintings, sculptures, and prints from the nineteen-eighties, including work by Jasper Johns, Barbara Kruger, Susan Rothenberg, and David Salle. Through March 24. . . . ¶ "Robert Rauschenberg: The Silk Screen Paintings, 1962-64." Through March 17. (Open Tuesdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)



William Bailey

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Parkway—Among the seventy-four paintings in "Albert Bierstadt: Art & Enterprise" are several of the artist's monumental Western landscapes, as well as a selection of his smaller plein-air oil sketches. . . . ¶ A lobby installation by Reeva Potoff *that includes, among other* materials, pages of the 1911 Encyclopaedia Britannica arranged in a cone that reaches to the ceiling. Through March 31. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"Manifest Destiny," a small show of rare nineteenth-century books and illustrations relating to government expeditions into "frontier" areas in the United States. Through April 30. (Open Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 10 to 5:45; Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, 10 to 9.)

AMERICAN CRAFT MUSEUM, 40 W. 53rd St.—Thirty-five pieces of furniture made over the past thirty years by Wendell Castle. Many of the pieces incorporate trompe-l'oeil and faux-Art Deco effects. Through April 28. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

ASIA SOCIETY, Park Ave. at 70th St.—"Romance of the Taj Mahal." Shah Jahan (1592-1666), a descendant of Tamerlane and Genghis Khan, ruler of the most powerful Indian empire, was a great patron of the arts. Of all the great Mogul monuments he erected, by far the best known is the Taj Mahal, a mausoleum for his favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal. The Taj Mahal is the ultimate expression of power through death, but, as the curator, Pratapaditya Pal, so deftly indicates in this exhibition's catalogue, it has also become synonymous with India in advertising and promotion, and has come to be associated with everything from riches to romance, blues singers to calendars. The first half of this exhibition includes a tight and often dazzling display of objects from Shah Jahan's court: an extensive and glorious collection of paintings to suit virtually every interest, from elegant depictions of court life to exquisite color studies of flowers; a rug intricately woven with two thousand knots per square inch; and magnificent rubies and emeralds. In the second half, which examines the hold the Taj Mahal has had on later generations of travellers and painters, this otherwise concise show becomes silly, with a succession of paintings ranging from mediocre to dreadful. Through March 17. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6; Sundays, noon to 5.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—"Children in Chinese Art" presents images of the little tykes in thirty-six objects, including paintings, ceramics, and jade, from the second century to the present. There is also a separate selection of more than a hundred works on paper by contemporary Chinese children. Through March 2. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

Grolier Club, 47 E. 60th St.—A show of pamphlets, posters, propaganda leaflets, invasion maps, personal letters, and official speeches produced during the Second World War. One display juxtaposes two letters sent home to wives after the launching of D Day: one from Eisenhower, hopeful and optimistic, the other from Rommel, who wrote, "The enemy's superiority in nearly all regards is overwhelming." Through March 2. (Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Jewish Museum, at the New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—A hundred sculptures and thirty-one drawings by Jacques Lipchitz. Through April 14. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Sundays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 3.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"The Drawings of Anthony Van Dyck." Ninety sketches, studies, and more elaborate preparatory drawings by the master baroque portraitist (1599-1641). Through April 21. . . . ¶ A smaller selection of forty drawings by seventeenth-century Flemish artists such as Rubens, Jacob Jordaens, and David Vinckboons. Through April 21. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Museo del Barrio, 1230 Fifth Ave., at 104th St.—The last stop on a three-year tour for "The International Art Show for the End of World Hunger." The exhibition presents work by forty artists, including Susan Rothenberg, Walter Dahn, Nam June Paik, and Richard Hamilton. Through March 15. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—A beautiful and entertaining group of drawings by the influential Swiss Romantic Henry Fuseli (1745-1825), who lived in London. The marvellous, informal vividness of these drawings, which are on loan from the Auckland City Art Gallery, in New Zealand, has led scholars to believe that the whole lot may have been chosen by Fuseli as a present to an artist friend—conceivably William Blake. Mad eighteenth-century hairdos abound (move over, Frida Kahlo!), along with highly literate depictions of scenes from Shakespeare and some very sexy interpretations of Greek mythology. In a melting "Eros and Psyche," from 1808, the curtain of modesty turns to vapor with one brush of Cupid's bow, and the artist, free now to boast, announces (in Greek), "This is, indeed, my Eros, not Titian's." Through March 24. . . . ¶ Eastman Johnson's "The Cranberry Harvest, Island of Nantucket" was first shown at the National Academy's 1880 annual exhibition, and it is now the centerpiece of a show that includes thirteen of the artist's other cranberry-harvest studies and paintings. Through March 24. (Open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge from 5 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—"Art What Thou Eat" is a show of eighty nineteenth- and twentieth-century paintings and sculptures, all having to do with those three square meals a day. Images range from Samuel Marsden Brookes' "Steelhead Salmon" (1885) to David Wojnarowicz's "Tuna" (1983). Through March 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"On Paper" examines the history of papermaking, from its invention in China through John Cage's edible paper. Through March 2. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall. Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 6.) . . . ¶ More than a hundred manuscript fragments, letters, first editions, photographs, and illustrations are all part of "Charles Dickens: His Life and Work." Through April 13. (Berg Collection. Open daily, except Sundays and Thursdays, 10 to 6.)

Queens Museum, Flushing Meadow Park—"The AIDS Epidemic Series": twenty-one large-scale paintings and eight drawings by Luis Cruz Azaceta. Through April 14. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—A show of forty works from the museum's collection, many recently acquired, including pieces by Romare Bearden, Betye and Alison Saar, and Sam Gilliam. Through March 17. . . . ¶ "From the Studio: Artists-in-Residence, 1989-90." Twenty-nine sculptures by Raùl Acero, Paul Gardère, and Jerome Meadows. Through March 17. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Brice Marden—The sight of Marden's classic seventies "Grove Group," assembled for the first time, is a slow, considerable pleasure and is also of historical note. The five abstract greenish paintings, inspired by sojourns in Greece, seem fired by landscape, tempered by architecture, and glazed by a sort of neo-Ruskinian moral anxiety, as well as, more literally, by the artist's characteristically lapidary encaustic technique. Through March 16. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

Short List—**THOMAS HART BENTON,** Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. (through March 2); **GREGORY GILLESPIE,** Forum, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. (through March 2); **MARKUS LÜPERTZ,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. (through March 30); **RICHARD OELZE,** Lafayette Parke, 58 E. 79th St. (through March 16); **PHILIP PEARLSTEIN** and **BARBARA SCHWARTZ,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. (open Mondays, through March 2); **ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. (through March 7); **ALICE SCHILLE,** Coe Kerr, 49 E. 82nd St. (open Mondays, through March 2).

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

Malcolm Morley—Morley's art is largely a matter of protean paint-handling skills governed by a fertile but chaotic brain. Here, in addition to a group of small pedestal sculptures of war machinery (they look like William Wegman's boy-toy images dipped and cast), we find a bunch of huge, luridly painted canvases that keep changing their minds, making a major theatrical display of tempestuous indecision. Abstract Expressionist broadstroking gives way to lyrical feathering, which in turn builds up to Freudian caricature à la Philip Guston or a neo-Gothic Expressionism reminiscent of Max Beckmann, only to culminate in a moment of sensitive painterly anecdote that brings to mind the early work of Alex Katz. There is one horizontally stacked triptych whose middle section—an Arthurian knight—almost had us weeping from maternal exhaustion. Morley is *very* motor. Through March 2. (Pace, 32 E. 57th St.)

Alice Provensen—A show of original watercolors for a recently published children's book titled "The Buck Stops Here: The Presidents of the United States." The visual style is bright, busy, and folkloric—quilts and samplers seem to have been inspirations—and the nuggets of information conveyed about our leaders are clear, essentially non-partisan, and respectful without being reverential. Well-known earlier collaborative works by Mrs. Provensen and her late husband, Martin, are also on view. Through March 9. (Feiwel, 24 W. 57th St.)

Short List—**WILLIAM BAILEY,** Schoelkopf, 50 W. 57th St. (through March 13); **BEN BERNS,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through March 2); **ROBERT GOODNOUGH,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. (through March 16); **HAROLD GREGOR,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. (through March 19); **PHILIP GUSTON,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. (through

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MOSCHINO

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

March 9); **JOE LASKER,** Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through March 20); **ARINA MALUKOVA** and **FRED REICHMAN,** Ruth Siegel, 24 W. 57th St. (through March 9); **ROBERT ANDREW PARKER,** Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St. (through March 9); **BETTY PARSONS,** Tilton, 24 W. 57th St. (through March 2); **RODNEY RIPPS,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. (through March 2); **CHARLES SELIGER,** Rosenfeld, 50 W. 57th St. (through March 9); **JACK TWORKOV** and **DOROTHEA ROCKBURNE,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. (through March 2); **NEIL WELLIVER,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through March 2).

GALLERIES—SoHo

JOHN BOWMAN—A series of meticulously rendered representational paintings on grainy wood, a material currently approaching overuse. Most of the imagery—an amusement park off season, for example—has a ghostly quality. When the artist depends too heavily on the wood grain for the image, as in a series of landscapes, the work becomes facile. In the straightest work, however—a portrait of an abandoned factory in a quarrylike setting—Bowman uses the grain to create an exquisite, inescapable luminosity. Through March 9. (Lang & O'Hara, 568 Broadway.)

BEAUFORD DELANEY (1901-79)—A retrospective of paintings by an overlooked black artist who lived the last twenty-five years of his life in Paris. There is a certain naïveté to the work, but much of it proves to be quietly intelligent. In a large scene of Washington Square from 1951 the artist demonstrates that he has learned the lessons of Cézanne and of the Fauvists, adding his own Dufyesque, decorative delight in street life. A display of eleven canvases from the sixties ranges from pale yellow to tangy lemon and merges Impressionistic and Expressionistic tendencies. In a number of portraits from the seventies, the artist reveals a humble appreciation of people. Through March 30. (Briet, 558 Broadway.)

MING FAY—The ultimate walk-in still-life: huge papier-mâché clamshells, wishbones, ginseng roots, mollusks, fruits, and other assorted organic matter arranged on the floor and walls. These painted sculptures are sensitively executed, and they have a fine degree of surface articulation and a pervasive sense of impending decay. The exhibition's subtitle, "From Archeology to Science Fiction," describes the tone accurately. Through March 23. (Exit Art, 578 Broadway.)

WOLFGANG LAIB—Two modest and powerful installations composed almost exclusively of beeswax. The first thing you notice is the scent, which is as comforting as freshly baked bread. One work consists of two elongated house shapes—the size of coffins and in the form of reliquaries—resting, above head level, on a pair of wooden beams sunk into the wall. The other consists of a long wall covered in honey-brown wax panels, with a low, recessed door. The piece is illuminated by a single bare bulb suspended by a wire. It's a beautiful and disturbing work, maternally warm and at the same time funereal. Through March 2. (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St.)

STEPHEN LAUB—These new objects, which incorporate small archival photographs, are more enigmatic and sculptural than Laub's earlier works. One piece, which is a bit Gober-like, is colored Ryman white and features a photo of black people in the back of a bus. Through March 2. (Wingate, 578 Broadway.)

MIMMO ROTELLA—A show tracing the course of Rotella's marriage of Abstract Expressionism and anarchy from the fifties to the present. Several decades ago, working alongside other *nouveaux réalistes*, Rotella ripped gangs of posters off Parisian streets. The earlier works here, which consist of layers of posters ripped through to reveal layers beneath, have uncannily sophisticated compositions and color relationships, with the arcing rhythms of Krasner and the compositional jaggedness of Still. The recent works continue the fifties spirit and add a touch of Dada: a larger poster of a woman in a green vinyl suit is ripped in a way that conjures Rothko. The show reaches a glorious climax with a billboard from 1990 for "Holiday on Ice"—a grand landscape with some of the heroic scale of Newman. Through March 9. (Ala, 560 Broadway.)

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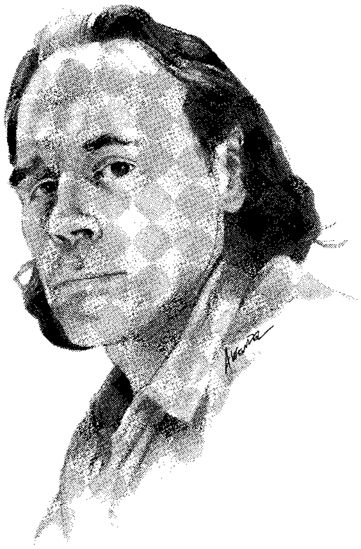


Brice Marden

PETER SHELTON—Each of these organic sculptures is distinct and well conceived. One long rusted metal piece looks like a gigantic hollowed-out spine; another looks a bit like a sturdy, ganglion form. There's a narrative richness to the show as a whole, yet for all its professionalism the work is ultimately unconvincing. Through March 9. (Louver, 130 Prince St.)

ALAN SHIELDS—Paintings on canvas embroidered with patterns of black, white, and colored threads. The pieces are very optical, with touches of orphic futurism, Op art, and Tantric art, as well as the mysticism of Alfred Jensen and the ritualistic, somewhat zany informality of Alighiero e Boetti. Through March 2. (Cooper, 149 Wooster St.)

GROUP SHOWS—At **ALEXANDER,** 59 Wooster St.: A well-installed show of works by three mature masters of the humble. Ulrich Rückriem's sculptures of roughly cut granite, which in certain situations seem a bit mute, are shown to best effect here. A series of paintings, entitled "A Sheet of Paper," by Rémy Zaugg, a Swiss artist little known in this country, brings a poetic approach to the artistic version of existentialism. And Richard Tuttle offers a bit of sunshine in a series of watercolor collages, from the mid-seventies, that have flashes of cool, Caribbean color. Through March 2. . . . **GLADSTONE,** 99 Greene St., and **STEINGLADSTONE,** 99 Wooster St.: Large-scale works by major artists who came of age in the sixties—LeWitt, Flavin, Nauman, Kounellis, Long, Merz, and Fabro. Most of the works look exquisite, including Long's recent circle made of bricks of English peat, LeWitt's cube progression from 1967, and, especially, Kounellis's band of musical instruments arranged along a wall, each with a blowtorch attached to it. Although the propane tanks are empty (owing to city regulations), burn marks on the wall and the floor give a sense of what this ghost band flambé might look and sound like. Through March 2. . . . **METRO PICTURES,** 150 Greene St.: A Freudian specializing in toilet training could have a field day at this oddly invigorating show, which juxtaposes some of Cindy Sherman's nastier photographs of hot dogs, dildos, and gooey condiments with Mike Kelley's "Garbage Drawings," his black, white, and mulatto tangles of yarn, and Carroll Dunham's drawings of invented organs and the gases they release. Through March 2.

SHORT LIST—**LARRY BELL** and **KENNY SCHARF,** Shafrazi, 130 Prince St. (through March 23); **STAN BRODSKY,** Kelly, 591 Broadway (through March 5); **ERIC BULATOV** and **OLEG VASSILYEV,** Kind, 136 Greene St. (through March 12); **LINDA DANIELS,** Fiction-Nonfiction, 21 Mercer St. (through March 9); **WIM DELVOYE,** Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway (through March 2); **SUE ETKIN,** Kasmin, 580 Broadway (through March 16); **LOUISE FISHMAN,** Lennon, Weinberg, 580 Broadway (through March 23); **PAUL GEORGES,** Plumb, 81 Greene St. (through March 16); **WILL MENTOR,** RubinSpangle, 395 West Broadway (through March 9); **DAVID RABINOWITCH,** Flynn, 113 Crosby St. (through April 30); **DAVID REED,** Protetch, 560 Broadway (through March 23); **ALAN SCARRITT,** Engelhorn, 591 Broadway (through March 16); **NANCY SPERO** and **CHRIS BURDEN,** Baer, 476 Broome St. (through March 9); **PAT SUTTON,** Zarre, 379 West Broadway (through March 9); **FRED WILSON** and **LESLEY DILL,** Gracie Mansion Gallery, 532 Broadway (through March 9).

PHOTOGRAPHY

IT'S hard to work with caricature in photography without coming off as snobbish or condescending. Most pictures that try to reveal how screwy things can get turn out to be cheap shots; a photographer who can pull off the humor of living is rare. We've always admired Elliot Erwitt for his ability to poke fun without exploiting his subjects, and in the past few years we've noticed that Martin Parr has this ability, too.

There's a good-sized exhibition of Parr's work currently at the Borden gallery (560 Broadway; through March 23). This group displays his talent for capturing faces at giveaway moments—the times when expressions betray all you need to know. Parr's especially good with stiff upper lips, boredom, and locked jaws. He's also witty on the subject of photography itself. One of his pictures at Borden shows a scene at the base of the Eiffel Tower, where the small crowd includes a pair of lovers and a photographer pointing a camera up to catch the monument's height. The angle of his camera is so extreme that you get the sense that he could fall right over. In another photograph, our favorite, a couple of tourists have arrived at a "view." The man has stepped out of the car that one presumes brought them there, and he is in the process of photographing a mountain topped with clouds. Meanwhile, his female companion sits in the car, reading what looks like a good gossip rag. One of its headlines declares, "GOLDILOCKS LOSES THE BORE WAR." Another reads, "SO SWEET THEY MAKE ME SICK." So much for lovely scenery.

(Parr's pictures can also be seen right now in "British Photography from the Thatcher Years," at the Museum of Modern Art.)

SHORT LIST—**LOIS CONNER** and **VAL TELBERG,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. (through March 16); **WILLIE DOHERTY,** Cugliani, 508 Greenwich St., at Spring St. (through March 2); **PETER HUJAR,** Danziger, 415 West Broadway (through March 30); **N. JAY JAFFEE,** Photofind, 138 Spring St. (through March 23); **STUART KLIPPER,** Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9, through March 19); **JACQUES HENRI LARTIGUE,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway (through March 16); **LISETTE MODEL,** International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Fridays, noon to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6; through March 24).

MUSIC

JANÁČEK promises to be for the opera what Mahler has been over the past three or four decades for the symphony: a vital infusion from the beginning of our century. Like Mahler, Janáček offers a fresh, serious, and complex body of work, capable of speaking to a broad audience yet still awaiting full exploration and digestion, on which a new generation of conductors (and, in Janáček's case, singers and directors) can build reputations and which a new generation of audiences can embrace as "repertory." New York has not been up to date in this respect; young London operagoers may well feel by now that Janáček is already "there," in the rich, continuous way that we feel Strauss and Mahler are "there." But "Káta Kabanová" is coming to the Met (it opens February 25 and will run through March), and plans for more Janáček are stirring at the precariously revitalized City Opera.

"Káta" is based on "The Storm," by A. N. Ostrovsky, a classic of nascent social realism in mid-nineteenth-century Russia. Reading the play may be the best way to prepare for the opera, and preparing for it in some way is essential. Janáček's operas are much more like drama-with-music than drama-through-song (as in, say, Verdi), and when they are given in a foreign language (the Met will use the original Czech) the listener who has not done some homework will more than likely feel lost.

For a classy effort at operatic preparation, take note of the Vienna Philharmonic's "Elektra," on March 3: two hours before the performance, which is in German, there will be a complete dramatic reading in English of the libretto (which began life as an independent play, loosely derived from Sophocles). There are reasons why this would work only in special circumstances—"Elektra" is a very short opera; the Carnegie Hall performance is a one-shot affair—but we're delighted to see it tried. One would expect, and be content with, eager unknowns and graduate students for such a preview; Carnegie is offering Colleen Dewhurst, Gloria Foster, Maria Tucci, John Rubinstein, and Len Cariou. The opera itself brings us Eva Marton and Brigitte Fassbaender, among others, under the direction of Lorin Maazel.

Barry Tuckwell

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Avery Fisher Hall 874-2424; for Alice Tully Hall 362-1911; for Carnegie Hall 247-7800; for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719; for the Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St., 570-3949; and for the Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St., 854-7799.)

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA—**KÁŤA KABANOVÁ,** with Gabriela Beňačková, Leonie Rysanek, Susan Quittmeyer, Wieslaw Ochman, and Aage Haugland; conducted by Charles Mackerras. (Feb. 25 and March 1 at 8.) . . . **LUISA MILLER,** with Kallen Esperian, Wendy White, Luciano Pavarotti, and Leo Nucci; Nello Santi. (Feb. 26 at 8 and March 2 at 1:30.) . . . With Maria Spacagna, Wendy White, Luciano Pavarotti, and Leo Nucci; Nello Santi. (March 5 at 8.) . . . **DER ROSENKAVALIER,** with Mechthild Gessendorf, Delores Ziegler, Barbara Kilduff, and Aage Haugland; Jiři Kout. (Feb. 27 and March 6 at 7:30.). . . With Mechthild Gessendorf, Tatiana Troyanos, Barbara Kilduff, and Aage Haugland; Jiři Kout. (March 2 at 7:30.) . . . **LE NOZZE DI FIGARO,** with Kiri Te Kanawa, Helen Donath, Frederica von Stade, Jorma Hynninen, and Samuel Ramey; James Conlon. (Feb. 28 and March 4 at 8.)

AMATO OPERA COMPANY—Presenting a new production of Verdi's rarely performed "I Due Foscari." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. March 2 at 7:30 and March 3 at 2:30. Through March 24.)

"ELEKTRA"—Lorin Maazel directs the Vienna Philharmonic and the Westminster Symphonic Choir in a concert performance of Strauss's opera, featuring sopranos Eva Marton and Elizabeth Connell, mezzo-soprano Brigitte Fassbaender, tenor James King, and baritone Franz Grundheber. (Carnegie Hall. March 3 at 2; preceded at noon by a dramatic reading, open to ticket-holders, of an English translation of the libretto.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—At Avery Fisher Hall, Franz Welser-Möst conducting. Feb. 26 at 8: Symphonies by Mozart and Mendelssohn, as well as Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto (with Maxim Vengerov). . . . ¶ Feb. 28, March 2, and March 5, all at 8; and March 1 at 11 A.M.: Dvořák's "Carnival Overture," Franz Schmidt's Fourth Symphony, and Mozart's D-Minor Piano Concerto, with Elisabeth Leonskaja.

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY—Herbert Blomstedt conducting. Feb. 25 at 8: Beethoven's Fourth Symphony, the New York première of George Perle's "Sinfonietta II," and Hindemith's Cello Concerto, with Yo-Yo Ma. (Carnegie Hall.) . . . ¶ Feb. 27 at 8: Bartók's "Concerto for Orchestra," a new work by Peter Lieberson, and Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, with Gil Shaham. (Avery Fisher Hall.)

VIENNA PHILHARMONIC—At Carnegie Hall, Claudio Abbado conducting. Feb. 26 at 8: Bruckner's Fourth Symphony (the "Romantic") and the "Lied der Waldtaube" from Schoenberg's "Gurrelieder," with mezzo-soprano Brigitte Fassbaender. . . . ¶ Feb. 27 at 8: Bruckner's Fourth Symphony and Mozart's Second Flute Concerto, with soloist Wolfgang Schulz. . . . ¶ Feb. 28 and March 2 at 8: Webern's "Six Pieces for Orchestra" and Mahler's First Symphony.

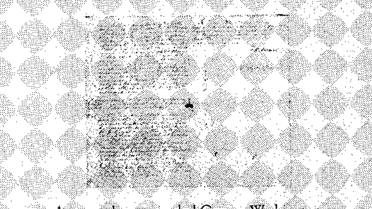
NEW YORK CHAMBER SYMPHONY—Erich Leinsdorf conducts Bach's Cantatas Nos. 55, 82, and 140; with soprano Benita Valente, tenor John Aler, baritone Hermann Prey, and the Concert Chorale of New York. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Feb. 28 and March 2 at 8, and March 3 at 3.)

ST. PAUL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA—Christopher Hogwood conducts Mozart's "Prague" Symphony, Gounod's "Petite Symphonie" for winds, and (with pianist Jon Kimura Parker) Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto. (Avery Fisher Hall. March 3 at 3.)

AUCTIONS AT SWANN

March 7 at 10:30 a.m.
BOOKS ABOUT BOOKS
Catalogue $10

March 14 at 10:30 a.m.
AUTOGRAPHS



Apparently unrecorded George Washington autograph document concerning a complicated venture to increase his Mount Vernon property, June 1769.
Illustrated Catalogue $20

March 21 at 10:30 a.m.
MAPS & ATLASES
DECORATIVE GRAPHICS

Seutter, *Novi Belgii in America Septentrionali*, Augsburg, circa 1730.
Illustrated Catalogue $15

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MUSIC—Cont'd

Baltimore Symphony—David Zinman conducts the New York première of John Harbison's Third Symphony, Stravinsky's "Petroushka," and Mozart's Piano Concerto in E-Flat, K. 449 (with Richard Goode as soloist). (Carnegie Hall. March 4 at 8.)

Philadelphia Orchestra—Kurt Masur conducts Mozart's Symphonies Nos. 29 and 38 and his A-Major Piano Concerto (with Emanuel Ax). (Carnegie Hall. March 5 at 8.)

Pomerium Musices—Alexander Blachly directs music by Dufay. (Christ Church United Methodist, Park Ave. at 60th St. March 2 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Pro Arte Chorale—Bart Folse directs American and British choral music, including Vaughan Williams' Mass in G Minor. (Church of St. Paul the Apostle, 415 W. 59th St., at 9th Ave. March 3 at 7:30. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Tallis Scholars—Peter Phillips directs the a-cappella ensemble in music from Renaissance Prague and Tudor England (including Byrd's Mass for Five Voices). (Church of St. Mary the Virgin, 145 W. 46th St. 921-2939. March 5 at 8.)

Ascension Music Chorus and Orchestra—Dennis Keene directs sacred works by Mozart (including the Requiem), with various soloists. (Church of the Ascension, Fifth Ave. at 10th St. 254-8553. March 5 at 8.)

RECITALS

Juilliard Focus! 91—At the Juilliard Theatre. A retrospective of twentieth-century music of neoclassical inspiration. Feb. 25: Music from the nineteen-twenties and thirties by Milhaud, de Falla (his Harpsichord Concerto), Stravinsky (his Concerto for Two Solo Pianos), and others. . . . ¶ Feb. 26: Works by Americans (and American immigrants), including Cowell, Nancarrow, Hindemith, and Mennin. . . . ¶ Feb. 27: Post-Second World War compositions by Dallapiccola, Rochberg, Shostakovich, and others. . . . ¶ Feb. 28: Joel Sachs conducts the Juilliard Chamber Orchestra in Levko Kolodub's Third Symphony ("In the Style of the Ukrainian Baroque, 1980") and the New York première of Schnittke's Fourth Symphony. (155 W. 65th St. Evenings at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required for all events, call 874-7515.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Presenting works by Bach, Mozart, and Berio, as well as a new Clarinet Quintet by Ellen Zwilich. (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 26 at 7:30.)

Tokyo String Quartet—Three Mozart quartets and, with violist Pinchas Zukerman, the G-Minor Quintet. (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 27 at 8.)

Artek Ensemble—The early-instrument ensemble, directed by Gwendolyn Toth, presents music and dances from Spain and Italy, featuring soprano Christine Brandes and Baroque dancer Alan Tjaarda Jones (who will perform, among other things, a Spanish "Folias," fully costumed, and clacking the castanets). (St. Michael's Church, Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. Feb. 27 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the performance.)

Musicians from Marlboro—Performing works by Mozart, Franck, and Webern. (Metropolitan Museum. Feb. 27 at 8.)

New Music Consort—The ensemble performs music by Milton Babbitt (who will deliver a commentary); and Martin Goldray performs late piano works by Brahms. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Feb. 28 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Griffin Music Ensemble—The Boston-based contemporary-music group performs works by Dallapiccola, Donald Martino, and others. (Miller Theatre. Feb. 28 at 8.)

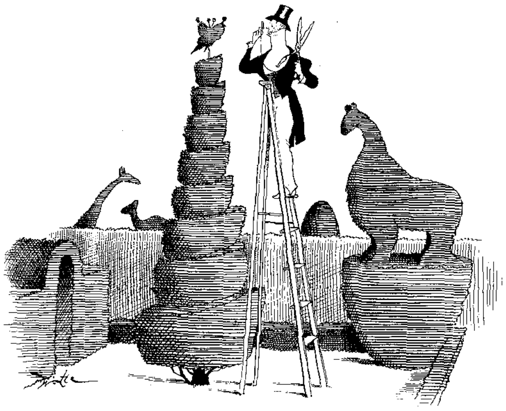
Nash Ensemble—The British chamber musicians perform Schubert's "Trout" Quintet and a Mozart flute quartet. (Metropolitan Museum. March 1 at 7.)

Barry Tuckwell—The horn player performs chamber music by Beethoven, Brahms, and Hindemith, assisted by violinist Daniel Heifetz and pianist Marcantonio Barone. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. March 1 at 8.)

Haydn Festival—At the Metropolitan Museum. The opening performances of a six-concert series (which will run through March 10) spotlighting solo and chamber music written by Haydn during his visits to London in the seventeen-nineties. Concerts feature pianist András Schiff (the festival's organizer and director), violinist Yuuko Shiokawa, cellist Boris Pergamenschikow, the Tákacs String Quartet, and guest singers. March 2 at 8: Piano Sonata No. 50, two trios, a string quartet, and the chamber cantata "Arianna a Naxos," with mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli. . . . ¶ March 3 at 8: Piano Sonata No. 48, two trios, and a string quartet.

Melvyn Tan—Performing works by Mozart and Beethoven on the fortepiano. (Alice Tully Hall. March 3 at 3.)

Hilliard Ensemble—The male vocal quartet performs a wide-ranging program of music from Machaut to Arvo Pärt. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. March 3 at 5.)



Robert Fertita—Organist, playing music by Bach, Brahms, and others. Presented by the Friends of Music. (Church of the Holy Trinity, 316 E. 88th St. March 3 at 5. Tickets at the door on the day of the concert.)

Anne-Sophie Mutter—The violinist plays the three Brahms sonatas, with pianist Lambert Orkis. (Avery Fisher Hall. March 3 at 7:30.)

Los Angeles Guitar Quartet—A program of Telemann, Rossini, and de Falla transcriptions, as well as several original works for the ensemble. (Alice Tully Hall. March 3 at 7:30.)

Jean Kopperud—The clarinettist performs new works by William Thomas McKinley, Tom O'Horgan, and others; assisted by flutist Linda Chesis, clarinettist Laura Flax, and pianist Cameron Grant. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 4 at 8.)

Hai-Ye Ni—Cellist, winner of the 1990 Naumburg International Cello Competition, performs Beethoven, Britten, Nadia Boulanger, and others; with pianist Anne Epperson. (Alice Tully Hall. March 4 at 8.)

Music from SummerFest—Pianist Ilana Vered and three string players perform piano quartets of Brahms, Strauss, and Mahler. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 5 at 8.)

Tribute to Ussachevsky—A multimedia event—including music, dance, and computer-generated imagery—in honor of the late Vladimir Ussachevsky, a pioneer of electronic music and a co-founder of the Princeton-Columbia Electronic Music Center. (Miller Theatre. March 5 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the performance.)

Juilliard String Quartet—Playing an all-Mozart program: three quartets and, with guest violist Michael Tree, the E-Flat Quintet, K. 614. (Alice Tully Hall. March 6 at 8.)

Bali and the Western World—Stephen Mosko directs the Music Today Ensemble in works based on Balinese models, by Colin McPhee, Lou Harrison, Claude Vivier, Gerald Levinson, and Evan Ziporyn; and the Dharma Swara Balinese Gamelan performs traditional Balinese pieces. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 6 at 8.)

American String Quartet—Performing three of Mozart's quartets dedicated to Haydn. (Miller Theatre. March 6 at 8.)

JAZZ / POP / ROCK PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens—"You find that you are offending yourself if you listen to this music sitting down," says West Nkosi, the legendary South African producer whose *mbaqanga* records have brought "the indestructible beat of Soweto" to worldwide popularity. The king of *mbaqanga* is Simon Mahlathini, a growling-voiced singer who, in his crown and his fur leggings, is a sight to behold. He and his Mahotella Queens (Mildred Mangxola, Hilda Tloubatia, and Nobesuthu Shawe) have been together since 1964, and their virtuoso mix of reggae, boiling soul, and Zulu call-and-response is indeed a joyous occasion for dancing. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. March 1 at 8.)

Daryl Hall and John Oates—Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Feb. 25-26 at 8.

Lenny Pickett—Dance Theatre Workshop. 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Feb. 25-26 at 8.

Patrick Street—With Triona Ni Dhomhnaill. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. March 1 at 8.)

New York Rock & Soul Revue II—With Donald Fagen, Michael McDonald, Boz Scaggs, Phoebe Snow, and others. (Beacon Theatre. March 1-2 at 8.)

"A Great Night for the Irish"—Frank Patterson, Des Keogh, Cherish the Ladies, and many others. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. March 2 at 8.)

Sting—With Concrete Blonde. (Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 794-9300. March 6 at 8.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Knicks—Vs. the Washington Bullets, Feb. 26 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the San Antonio Spurs, Feb. 28 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Phoenix Suns, March 5 at 8.

Nets—Vs. the Indiana Pacers, Feb. 26. . . . ¶ Vs. the Milwaukee Bucks, Feb. 28. . . . ¶ Vs. the Knicks, March 2. (Game time, 7:30.)

Rangers—Vs. the Washington Capitals, Feb. 27. . . . ¶ Vs. the Philadelphia Flyers, March 4. (Game time, 7:30.)

Islanders—Vs. the Buffalo Sabres, Feb. 26. . . . ¶ Vs. the Devils, March 5. (Game time, 7:35.)

Devils—Vs. the Washington Capitals, Feb. 25. . . . ¶ Vs. the Boston Bruins, March 3. (Game time, 7:45.)

(The Knicks and the Rangers play at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; the Islanders at the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300; and the Nets and the Devils at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

RACING

Horses—At Aqueduct: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1. . . . **trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8, and Tuesdays at 1. . . . At the Meadowlands: Weeknights at 7:30.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Orchid Show—This exhibition at the New York Botanical Garden is especially for those who feel overwhelmed—wilted?—by winter weather. More than fifty varieties of orchids, as well as two hundred varieties of ferns, will be on display at the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, March 1-3 and March 5-10; open 10 to 5.

Sculpting—In Corona Park, Queens, Robert Ressler is currently at work on an enormous mantis made of ash, two benches made of white oak, and a very tall tower made of tree trunks. Visitors to the park can watch Mr. Ressler carve and saw, and can ask him questions about the creative process. He will be in residence through the summer. Call 1-718 545-7798 for his daily whereabouts.

Readings—Feb. 28 at 6: John Hollander and Timothy Healy read poems by Thomas Hardy and Gerard Manley Hopkins. (Trustees' Room, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. For information about tickets, call 930-0654.) . . . ¶ March 4 at 8: Diane Ackerman, Carolyn Forché, Linda Hogan, Maxine Kumin, and Janet Sternburg read their own essays. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 645-5848.) . . . ¶ March 4 at 8: Robert Hass and Daniel Halpern read from their own poetry. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.) . . . ¶ March 5 at 7:30: Lucille Clifton reads from her own poetry. (Dia Center for the Arts, 155 Mercer St. Tickets at the door.)

Talks—Feb. 28 at 6:30: JoAnne Akalaitis, John Guare, Robert Marx, and Richard Nelson talk about theatre. (New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. For information about tickets, call 870-1671.) . . . ¶ March 5 at 8: Fred Schneider, of the B-52's, talks about his career. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 741-5690.)

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3	4	5	6			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 20.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "Metropolitan" (directed by Whit Stillman), with Edward Clements, Carolyn Farina, Christopher Eigeman, and Taylor Nichols.
Theatre 2: The Third Animation Celebration.
Theatre 3: "Vincent & Theo" (†).
Theatre 4: "Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead" (†).
Theatre 5: "Iron & Silk" (Shirley Sun), with Mark Salzman.
Theatre 6: "Cyrano de Bergerac" (Jean-Paul Rappeneau, in French), with Gérard Depardieu.

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Feb. 26-28: (Separate admissions) "Touki Bouki" (1973, Djibril Diop-Mambety; a Senegalese film); and "Faces of Women" (1985, Desire Ecare).
From March 1: "Fable of the Beautiful Pigeon Fancier" (Ruy Guerra; in Portuguese).

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "L.A. Story" (†).
Theatre 2: "Sleeping with the Enemy" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Feb. 28: (Matinées only) "The NeverEnding Story II The Next Chapter" (George Miller), with Jonathan Brandis; and (evenings only) "Sleeping with the Enemy" (†). From March 1: "The Doors" (Oliver Stone), with Val Kilmer, Meg Ryan, Kevin Dillon, Kyle MacLachlan, and Frank Whaley.

Cinema 12, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
"The Vanishing" (†).

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: "Scenes from a Mall" (Paul Mazursky), with Bette Midler and Woody Allen.
Theatre 2: "The Sleazy Uncle" (Franco Brusati; in Italian), with Vittorio Gassman, Giancarlo Giannini, and Andrea Ferreol.
Theatre 3: "Superstar: The Life and Times of Andy Warhol" (Chuck Workman), a documentary.
Theatre 4: "Mr. & Mrs. Bridge" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Field" (Jim Sheridan), with Richard Harris, John Hurt, Tom Berenger, Brenda Fricker, and Sean Bean.

Loews 19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "The Godfather Part III" (†).
Theatre 2: "Dances with Wolves" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Silence of the Lambs" (†).
Theatre 4: "He Said, She Said" (Ken Kwapis and Marisa Silver), with Kevin Bacon, Elizabeth Perkins, and Sharon Stone.
Theatre 5: "The Silence of the Lambs" (†).
Theatre 6: "L.A. Story" (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
Through Feb. 28: "Princes in Exile" (Giles Walker).
From March 1: "Shipwrecked" (Nils Gaup), with Stian Smestad and Gabriel Byrne.

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"The Grifters" (†).

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: "Green Card" (†).
Theatre 2: "Hamlet" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Field" (Jim Sheridan), with Richard Harris, John Hurt, Tom Berenger, Brenda Fricker, and Sean Bean.
Theatre 4: "Scenes from a Mall" (Paul Mazursky), with Bette Midler and Woody Allen.

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "He Said, She Said" (Ken Kwapis and Marisa Silver), with Kevin Bacon, Elizabeth Perkins, and Sharon Stone.
Theatre 2: "King Ralph" (David S. Ward), with John Goodman, Peter O'Toole, and John Hurt.
Theatre 3: "The Silence of the Lambs" (†).

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Awakenings" (†).

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"GoodFellas" (†).

Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: Through Feb. 28: "Nothing but Trouble" (Dan Aykroyd), with Chevy Chase, Aykroyd, John Candy, and Demi Moore. From March 1: "Shipwrecked" (Nils Gaup), with Stian Smestad and Gabriel Byrne.
Theatre 2: "Superstar: The Life and Times of Andy Warhol" (Chuck Workman), a documentary.

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"Sleeping with the Enemy" (†).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Cyrano de Bergerac" (Jean-Paul Rappeneau, in French), with Gérard Depardieu.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Reversal of Fortune" (†).
Theatre 2: "King Ralph" (David S. Ward), with John Goodman, Peter O'Toole, and John Hurt.

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci, Daniel Stern, John Heard, and Catherine O'Hara.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Awakenings" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Grifters" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "Scenes from a Mall" (Paul Mazursky), with Bette Midler and Woody Allen.
Theatre 2: "Green Card" (†).
Theatre 3: "Mr. & Mrs. Bridge" (†).

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: Through Feb. 28: "The NeverEnding Story II The Next Chapter" (George Miller), with Jonathan Brandis. From March 1: "The Doors" (Oliver Stone), with Val Kilmer, Meg Ryan, Kevin Dillon, Kyle MacLachlan, and Frank Whaley.
Theatre 2: "L.A. Story" (†).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"Once Around" (Lasse Hallström), with Richard Dreyfuss, Holly Hunter, Danny Aiello, Laura San Giacomo, and Gena Rowlands.

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "The Silence of the Lambs" (†).
Theatre 2: "He Said, She Said" (Ken Kwapis and Marisa Silver), with Kevin Bacon, Elizabeth Perkins, and Sharon Stone.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Hamlet" (†).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Dances with Wolves" (†).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"He Said, She Said" (Ken Kwapis and Marisa Silver), with Kevin Bacon, Elizabeth Perkins, and Sharon Stone.

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "King Ralph" (David S. Ward), with John Goodman, Peter O'Toole, and John Hurt.
Theatre 2: "Edward Scissorhands" (†).

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "Nothing but Trouble" (Dan Aykroyd), with Chevy Chase, Aykroyd, John Candy, and Demi Moore.
Theatre 2: "Scenes from a Mall" (Paul Mazursky), with Bette Midler and Woody Allen.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through Feb. 26: "Larks on a String" (1969, directed by Jiri Menzel; in Czech). From Feb. 27: "Blood in the Face" (†).
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: "1900" (1977, Bernardo Bertolucci), with Robert De Niro, Burt Lancaster, Donald Sutherland, Dominque Sanda, Sterling Hayden, and Gérard Depardieu.

Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "The Silence of the Lambs" (†).
Theatre 2: "Awakenings" (†).

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
"Hamlet" (†).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "The Grifters" (†).
Theatre 2: "King Ralph" (David S. Ward), with John Goodman, Peter O'Toole, and John Hurt.

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "Green Card" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Feb. 28: "Alligator Eyes" (John Feldman). From March 1: "Misplaced" (Louis Yansen), with Viveca Lindfors and John Cameron Mitchell.
Theatre 3: "GoodFellas" (†).
Theatre 4: "Reversal of Fortune" (†).

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "Edward Scissorhands" (†).
Theatre 2: "King Ralph" (David S. Ward), with John Goodman, Peter O'Toole, and John Hurt.
Theatre 3: "Nothing but Trouble" (Dan Aykroyd), with Chevy Chase, Aykroyd, John Candy, and Demi Moore.
Theatre 4: "Sleeping with the Enemy" (†).
Theatre 5: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci, Daniel Stern, John Heard, and Catherine O'Hara.
Theatre 6: "Awakenings" (†).
Theatre 7: "The Grifters" (†).
Theatre 8: "Once Around" (Lasse Hallström), with Richard Dreyfuss, Holly Hunter, Danny Aiello, Laura San Giacomo, and Gena Rowlands.
Theatre 9: "The Grifters" (†).

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0600)
Theatre 1: "GoodFellas" (†).
Theatre 2: "Kindergarten Cop" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger, Penelope Ann Miller, Pamela Reed, Linda Hunt, and Richard Tyson.
Theatre 3: (Separate admissions) "Misery" (Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates; and "Postcards from the Edge" (Mike Nichols), with Meryl Streep and Shirley MacLaine.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"Scenes from a Mall" (Paul Mazursky), with Bette Midler and Woody Allen.

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "Reversal of Fortune" (†).
Theatre 2: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci, Daniel Stern, John Heard, and Catherine O'Hara.
Theatre 3: "King Ralph" (David S. Ward), with John Goodman, Peter O'Toole, and John Hurt.
Theatre 4: "Edward Scissorhands" (†).
Theatre 5: "Green Card" (†).
Theatre 6: "Queens Logic" (Steve Rash), with Joe Mantegna, John Malkovich, Kevin Bacon, Ken Olin, Tony Spiridakis, Linda Fiorentino, Chloe Webb, Tom Waits, and Jamie Lee Curtis.

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
Through Feb. 28: "Sleeping with the Enemy" (†).
From March 1: "The Doors" (Oliver Stone), with Val Kilmer, Meg Ryan, Kevin Dillon, Kyle MacLachlan, and Frank Whaley.

Loews Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7356)
"The Godfather Part III" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
Through Feb. 28: "The Sheltering Sky" (Bernardo Bertolucci), with Debra Winger, John Malkovich, and Campbell Scott.
From March 1: "Heaven and Earth" (Karuki Kadokawa; in Japanese), with Takaaki Enoki and Masahiko Tsugawa.

Carnegie Hall Cinema, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
"Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead" (†).

Carnegie Screening Room, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (757-2131)
"The Long Walk Home" (Richard Pearce), with Sissy Spacek, Whoopi Goldberg, and Dwight Schultz.

Loews Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"Alice" (†).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
(Separate admissions) "Misery" (Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates; and "Postcards from the Edge" (Mike Nichols), with Meryl Streep and Shirley MacLaine.

LOEWS PARAMOUNT, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"Dances with Wolves" (†).

62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"Awakenings" (†).

LINCOLN PLAZA 1, 2, AND 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "The Nasty Girl" (Michael Verhoeven; in German), with Lena Stolze.
Theatre 2: "Taxi Blues" (Pavel Lounguine; in Russian).
Theatre 3: "Ay, Carmela!" (Carlos Saura; in Spanish), with Carmen Maura and Andrés Pajares.

REGENCY, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Once Around" (Lasse Hallström), with Richard Dreyfuss, Holly Hunter, Danny Aiello, Laura San Giacomo, and Gena Rowlands.

LOEWS 84TH STREET SIXPLEX, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "L.A. Story" (†).
Theatre 2: "Scenes from a Mall" (Paul Mazursky), with Bette Midler and Woody Allen.
Theatre 3: "The Silence of the Lambs" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Grifters" (†).
Theatre 5: "He Said, She Said" (Ken Kwapis and Marisa Silver), with Kevin Bacon, Elizabeth Perkins, and Sharon Stone.
Theatre 6: Through Feb. 28: "Nothing but Trouble" (Dan Aykroyd), with Chevy Chase, Aykroyd, John Candy, and Demi Moore. From March 1: "The Doors" (Oliver Stone), with Val Kilmer, Meg Ryan, Kevin Dillon, Kyle MacLachlan, and Frank Whaley.

METRO CINEMA 1 AND 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "King Ralph" (David S. Ward), with John Goodman, Peter O'Toole, and John Hurt.
Theatre 2: "Green Card" (†).

OLYMPIA I AND II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "The NeverEnding Story II The Next Chapter" (George Miller), with Jonathan Brandis; and (evenings only) "GoodFellas" (†).
Theatre 2: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci, Daniel Stern, John Heard, and Catherine O'Hara.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

CRITERION CENTER, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Misery" (directed by Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates.
Theatre 2: "The Grifters" (†).
Theatre 3: "L.A. Story" (†).
Theatre 4: "Popcorn" (Mark Herrier), with Tony Roberts.
Theatre 5: "GoodFellas" (†).
Theatre 6: Through Feb. 28: "The NeverEnding Story II The Next Chapter" (George Miller), with Jonathan Brandis. From March 1: "Sleeping with the Enemy" (†).

EMBASSY 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"The Godfather Part III" (†).

EMBASSY 2, 3, AND 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: "He Said, She Said" (Ken Kwapis and Marisa Silver), with Kevin Bacon, Elizabeth Perkins, and Sharon Stone.
Theatre 2: Through Feb. 28: "Eve of Destruction" (Duncan Gibbins), with Gregory Hines and Renée Soutendijk. From March 1: "Shipwrecked" (Nils Gaup), with Stian Smestad and Gabriel Byrne.
Theatre 3: "Ghost" (Jerry Zucker), with Patrick Swayze, Demi Moore, Whoopi Goldberg, and Tony Goldwyn.

LOEWS ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"The Silence of the Lambs" (†).

NATIONAL TWIN, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: "King Ralph" (David S. Ward), with John Goodman, Peter O'Toole, and John Hurt.
Theatre 2: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.

WEST SIDE CINEMA 1 AND 2, 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)
Theatre 1: "Nothing but Trouble" (Dan Aykroyd), with Chevy Chase, Aykroyd, John Candy, and Demi Moore.
Theatre 2: "Run" (Geoff Burrowes), with Patrick Dempsey, Kelly Preston, and Ken Pogue.

REVIVAL HOUSES

BIOGRAPH CINEMA, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)
Through Feb. 26: "All About Eve" (1950, directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz), with Bette Davis, Anne Baxter, Hugh Marlowe, Thelma Ritter, George Sanders, Celeste Holm, and Gary Merrill; and "Dramatic School" (1938, Robert L. Sinclair), with Luise Rainer and Paulette Goddard.
Feb. 27-28: "Where the Sidewalk Ends" (1950, Otto Preminger), with Gene Tierney, Dana Andrews, Gary Merrill, and Karl Malden; and "Slattery's Hurricane" (1949, André de Toth), with Richard Widmark and Linda Darnell.
March 1-2: "Mildred Pierce" (1945, Michael Curtiz), with Joan Crawford, Jack Carson, Zachary Scott, Ann Blyth, and Eve Arden; and "Unfaithful" (1947, Vincent Sherman), with Ann Sheridan, Lew Ayres, Scott, and Arden.
March 3-4: "Cover Girl" (†); and "My Dream Is Yours" (1949, Michael Curtiz), with Jack Carson, Doris Day, Lee Bowman, and Eve Arden.
March 5-6: "Decision Before Dawn" (1951, Anatole Litvak), with Richard Basehart, Gary Merrill, and Oskar Werner; and "Phone Call from a Stranger" (1952, Jean Negulesco), with Shelley Winters, Gary Merrill, and Bette Davis.

CINEMA VILLAGE, 3rd Ave. between 12th and 13th. (505-7320)
Through Feb. 26: "Last Exit to Brooklyn" (1990, Uli Edel), with Stephen Lang, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Burt Young, and Alexis Arquette; and "Sammy and Rosie Get Laid" (1987, Stephen Frears), with Ayub Khan Din, Francis Barber, and Shashi Kapoor.
Feb. 27-March 2: "Henry V" (1989, Kenneth Branagh), with Branagh; and "Tom Jones" (1963, Tony Richardson), with Albert Finney, Susannah York, Hugh Griffith, Joyce Redman, and Edith Evans.
March 3-5: "Salaam Bombay!" (1988, Mira Nair; in Hindi); and "El Norte" (1983, Gregory Nava; in Spanish).
From March 6: To be announced.

FILM FORUM 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Feb. 25: "Cry, the Beloved Country" (1952, Zoltán Korda), with Canada Lee, Charles Carson, and Sidney Poitier; and "Intruder in the Dust" (1949, Clarence Brown), with Claude Jarman, Jr., and Juano Hernández.
Feb. 26-27: "The Story of a Three Day Pass" (1968, Melvin Van Peebles; in French and English), with Harry Baird and Nicole Berger; and "Watermelon Man" (1970, Van Peebles), with Godfrey Cambridge and Estelle Parsons.
Feb. 28: "Hearts in Dixie" (1929, Paul Sloane), with Clarence Muse and Stepin Fetchit; and a program of short films featuring black entertainers in the thirties.
March 1-2: "Stormy Weather" (†) and "Green Pastures" (†).
March 3-4: "No Way Out" (†) and "Blackboard Jungle" (†).
March 5: "God's Stepchildren" (1938, Oscar Micheaux); and "Dirty Gertie from Harlem" (1946, Spencer Williams).
From March 6: "Bright Road" (1953, Gerald Mayer), with Dorothy Dandridge and Harry Belafonte; and "Tarzan's Peril" (1951, Bryon Haskin), with Lex Barker and Dandridge.

THEATRE 80 ST. MARKS, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Feb. 25: "Colonel Redl" (1985, István Szabó; in German), with Klaus Maria Brandauer; and "Veronika Voss" (1982, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German), with Rosel Zech.
Feb. 26: "The Seven Year Itch" (1955, Billy Wilder), with Marilyn Monroe, Tom Ewell, Victor Moore, Evelyn Keyes, and Sonny Tufts; and "Some Like It Hot" (1959, Wilder), with Monroe, Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon, and Joe E. Brown.
Feb. 27: "Portrait of Jennie" (1949, William Dieterle), with Jennifer Jones, Joseph Cotten, Ethel Barrymore, and Lillian Gish; and "Duel in the Sun" (1946, King Vidor), with Jones, Gregory Peck, Cotten, Walter Huston, Charles Bickford, and Gish.
Feb. 28: "Animal Crackers" (1930, Victor Heerman), with the Marx Brothers; and "Duck Soup" (†).
March 1-2: "The Maltese Falcon" (1941, John Huston), with Mary Astor, Humphrey Bogart, Sydney Greenstreet, Elisha Cook, Jr., and Peter Lorre; and "Casablanca" (1942, Michael Curtiz), with Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, and Claude Rains.
March 3: "Trouble in Paradise" (1932, Ernst Lubitsch), with Kay Francis, Herbert Marshall, and Miriam Hopkins; and "Design for Living" (1933, Lubitsch), with Fredric March, Hopkins, and Gary Cooper.
March 4: "Juliet of the Spirits" (1965, Federico Fellini; in Italian), with Giulietta Masina; and "Il Bidone" (1955, Fellini; in Italian), with Broderick Crawford, Masina, and Richard Basehart.
March 5: "Leave Her to Heaven" (1945, John M. Stahl), with Gene Tierney, Cornel Wilde, Jeanne Crain, and Vincent Price; and "Rings on Her Fingers" (1942, Rouben Mamoulian), with Tierney, Henry Fonda, Laird Cregar, and Spring Byington.
March 6: "I Could Go On Singing" (1963, Ronald Neame), with Judy Garland, Dirk Bogarde, and Jack Klugman; and "The Star" (1953, Stuart Heisler), with Bette Davis, Sterling Hayden, and Natalie Wood.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—Feb. 25 at 2: "Casablanca" (1942, directed by Michael Curtiz), with Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, and Claude Rains. . . . ¶ Feb. 25 at 5: "Ivan the Terrible, Part I" (1943, Sergei Eisenstein; in Russian), with Nikolai Cherkassov. . . . ¶ Feb. 26 at 2:30: "Brief Encounter" (1945, David Lean), with Celia Johnson, Trevor Howard, and Stanley Holloway. . . . ¶ Feb. 26 at 3 and 6 and March 5 at 6: Three different programs of Ida Lupino television films. . . . ¶ Feb. 26 at 6 and Feb. 28 at 2: "The Raven" (1943, Henri-Georges Clouzot; in French), with Pierre Fresnay. . . . ¶ Feb. 28 at 3 and 6: "Sea of Oil" (1990, Mary Katzke) and "Black Water" (1990, Charlotte Cerf and Allen Moore), both documentaries. . . . ¶ Feb. 28 at 6: "Brief Encounter." . . . ¶ March 1 at 2:30: "Kind Hearts and Coronets" (1949, Robert Hamer), with Alec Guinness, Dennis Price, and Valerie Hobson. . . . ¶ March 1 at 3 and 6, and March 2-3 at 2:30 and 5: Academy Award-nominated films for feature-length documentary. . . . ¶ March 1 at 6: "The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp" (1943, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger), with Roger Livesey, Deborah Kerr, and Anton Walbrook. . . . ¶ March 2 at 2: "Sullivan's Travels" (1941, Preston Sturges), with Joel McCrea, Veronica Lake, and Robert Warwick. . . . ¶ March 2 at 5: "Henry V" (1945, Laurence Olivier), with Olivier, Robert Newton, and Leslie Banks. . . . ¶ March 3 at 2: "The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp." . . . ¶ March 3 at 5: "Kind Hearts and Coronets." . . . ¶ March 4-5 at 2:30 and 6: Academy Award-nominated films for foreign-language feature. . . . ¶ March 4 at 6:30: "Everything for You" (1989, Abraham Ravett). Mr. Ravett will be present.

Val Kilmer in "The Doors"

MUSEUM OF BROADCASTING, 1 E. 53rd St. (752-7684)—Programs about contemporary comedians and people who influenced them. Joe Piscopo: Feb. 26-March 2: "The Joe Piscopo Special" (1984, HBO); and clips of Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, and Jerry Lewis. . . . From March 5: Excerpts from Piscopo's television work; "The Bensonhurst Bomber"

MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

(1956, CBS), an episode from "The Honeymooners," with Jackie Gleason; and episodes from other shows that influenced Piscopo. Showings Tuesdays at 12:15 and 5:30 and Wednesdays through Saturdays at 12:15. . . . ¶ James Dean television appearances. Feb. 26-March 2: "The Thief" (1955, ABC), an episode of "U.S. Steel Hour," with Mary Astor; and "I'm a Fool" (1954, CBS), an episode of "General Electric Theater," with Natalie Wood and Eddie Albert. Showings Tuesday at 2 and 5:30 and Wednesday through Saturday at 2. . . . ¶ "On Stage at Carnegie Hall: A Centennial Celebration." Feb. 26-March 2: "ASCAP and Carnegie Hall Celebrate Irving Berlin's 100th Birthday" (1988, CBS). . . . From March 5: "Aaron Copland: An American Birthday" (1981, Bravo), in celebration of his eightieth birthday. Showings Tuesdays at 2:30 and 5:30 and Wednesdays through Saturdays at 2:30.

Anthology Film Archives, 32-34 Second Ave., at Second St. (477-2714)—Feb. 27-28 at 8:30: Two different programs of Stan Brakhage films. . . . ¶ Feb. 27-28 at 7: "At the Crossroads—Jews in Eastern Europe" (1990, Oren Rudavsky and Yale Strom), a documentary.

Donnell Library Center, 20 W. 53rd St. (621-0619)—Feb. 26 at noon: "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black" (1972, Michael A. Schultz). . . . ¶ Feb. 26 at 2:30: "Cissy Houston: Sweet Inspiration" (1987, David Davidson) and ". . . But Then, She's Betty Carter" (1980, Michelle Parkerson). . . . ¶ Feb. 28 at noon: "High School" (1969, Frederick Wiseman). . . . ¶ March 5 at noon: "Riddles of the Sphinx" (1977, Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen). . . . ¶ March 5 at 2:30: "The Fable of He and She" (1974, Eliot Noyes, Jr.), "Sylvia, Fran and Joy" (1973, Joan Churchill), and "The Woman's Film" (1971, Louise Alaimo, Judy Smith, and Ellen Sorin).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—"From Harlem to Hollywood: The 1970s New Black Cinema." March 2 at 2: "Sparkle" (†). . . . ¶ March 2 at 4: "Mahogany" (1975, Berry Gordy), with Diana Ross, Billy Dee Williams, and Anthony Perkins. . . . ¶ March 3 at 4: "Claudine" (1974, John Berry), with James Earl Jones and Diahann Carroll.

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—Programs of videotapes made by, or starring, Andy Warhol. Showings Tuesdays at 2, 3:30, and 6:30; Wednesdays through Saturdays at noon, 1:30, and 3:30; and Sundays at 1, 2:30, and 4:30.

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Feb. 27 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Mama, There's a Man in Your Bed" (1989, Coline Serreau; in French), with Daniel Auteuil, Firmine Richard, and Maxime Leroux. . . . ¶ March 6 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "The Return of Martin Guerre" (1981, Daniel Vigne; in French), with Gérard Depardieu, Nathalie Baye, Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu, and Roger Planchon.

IN BRIEF

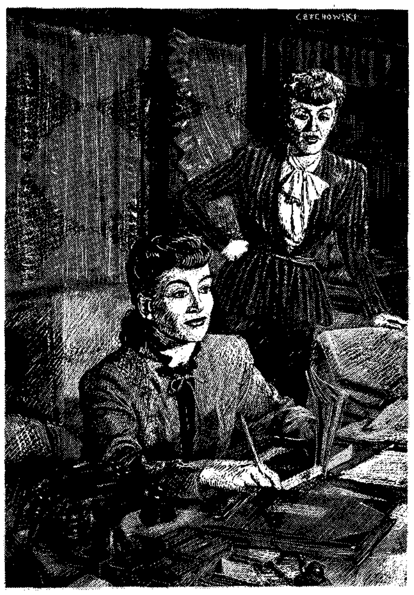
SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Terrence Rafferty.)

Alice—Woody Allen's latest picture is an awkward blend of whimsy and moralizing. The title character, played by Mia Farrow, is a pampered Upper East Side lady-who-lunches. She lives in a huge apartment with her handsome husband (William Hurt), her adorable children, and a staff, and she looks terrific. But her life, the movie tells us, is totally empty and false. A Chinatown doctor (Keye Luke) gives her a variety of herbal remedies to knock the yuppie malaise out of her system. One of them makes her invisible; one makes her irresistible to men; and so on. As these fantasy episodes mount up, Alice begins to see how artificial her life is, how far she's strayed from the pure ideals of her Catholic girlhood, how much more love she needs than she has been getting, and what a revolting piece of Wasp slime her husband is. In the end, the heroine seems, incredibly, to have redeemed herself through self-absorption: the movie doesn't benefit from any such miracle. Although there are more jokes here than in any of Allen's last few features, the picture isn't really a comedy; it's a sermon with gags. The large cast also includes Joe Mantegna, Alec Baldwin, Blythe Danner, Judy Davis, Bob Balaban, and Bernadette Peters (who does a sensational brief turn as a cynical muse).—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/31/90.) (Loews Fine Arts.)

Awakenings—This adaptation of Oliver Sacks' account of the awakening of post-encephalitic patients who had been "living statues" for decades is persuasive in its own terms, but it's also a near-perfect example of Hollywoodization. In the book, Sacks, the fabulist of illness, is drawn into his patients' aberrant states—he sees their abnormalities as brilliantly unique forms of consciousness to be charted. In the movie, the director, Penny Marshall, works the audience. She keeps zapping us to feel the humanistic, the obvious; her forte is to make blandness ring true. The movie is all about the doctor (Robin Williams) being a caring individual; Sacks, who's sensitized to prodigious kinds of experience, is turned into an absent-minded professor banging his head. As for Robert De Niro, who's the prize patient—well, when you're playing a silent, somnolent person who wakes up and soon after erupts into madness, you certainly give the impression that you're acting. As the head nurse—a role that's an embarrassment—Julie Kavner still manages to give the best performance. With the frail octogenarian Ruth Nelson as De Niro's mother, and John Heard, Penelope Ann Miller, Max von Sydow, and a large cast that includes Judith Malina, Richard Libertini, Laura Esterman, Anne Meara, Mary Catherine Wright, Alice Drummond, Keith Diamond, Peter Stormare, and Dexter Gordon. The screenplay is by Steven Zaillian; the syrupy music is by Randy Newman.—P.K. (2/11/91) (34th St. East, Baronet, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, and 62nd & Broadway.)

Blood in the Face—A skillfully made documentary about the radical right wing in North America. The movie's directors—Anne Bohlen, Kevin Rafferty, and James Ridgeway—put on display an alarmingly large aggregation of Fascist loonies: members of the Klan, the American Nazi Party, and other, less well-known organizations, all of them dedicated to spreading the gospel of anti-Semitism and white supremacy. What makes these zealots good subjects for a documentary is that they're compulsive talkers, tirelessly eager to expound their elaborate paranoid theories and make converts to the cause. (It passes the time while they wait for Armageddon.) Some really stunning delusional systems are elaborated here: everyone interviewed in this picture seems in need of a complete neurological workup. The film is fascinating, but it's also frustrating in that it doesn't provide much of a context for its menagerie of crackpots. The filmmakers don't try to explain the origins of these reactionary movements or to assess their current strength. The movie's tone is sometimes cautionary, suggesting that these groups constitute a sizable and material danger, and sometimes merely condescending, encouraging us to respond to the sheer ridiculousness of the radical right's ideas. When the film is over, all we can say for sure is that we've seen a compelling freak show.—T.R. (Film Forum; starting Feb. 27.)



At the Biograph Cinema, Joan Crawford and Eve Arden in "Mildred Pierce"

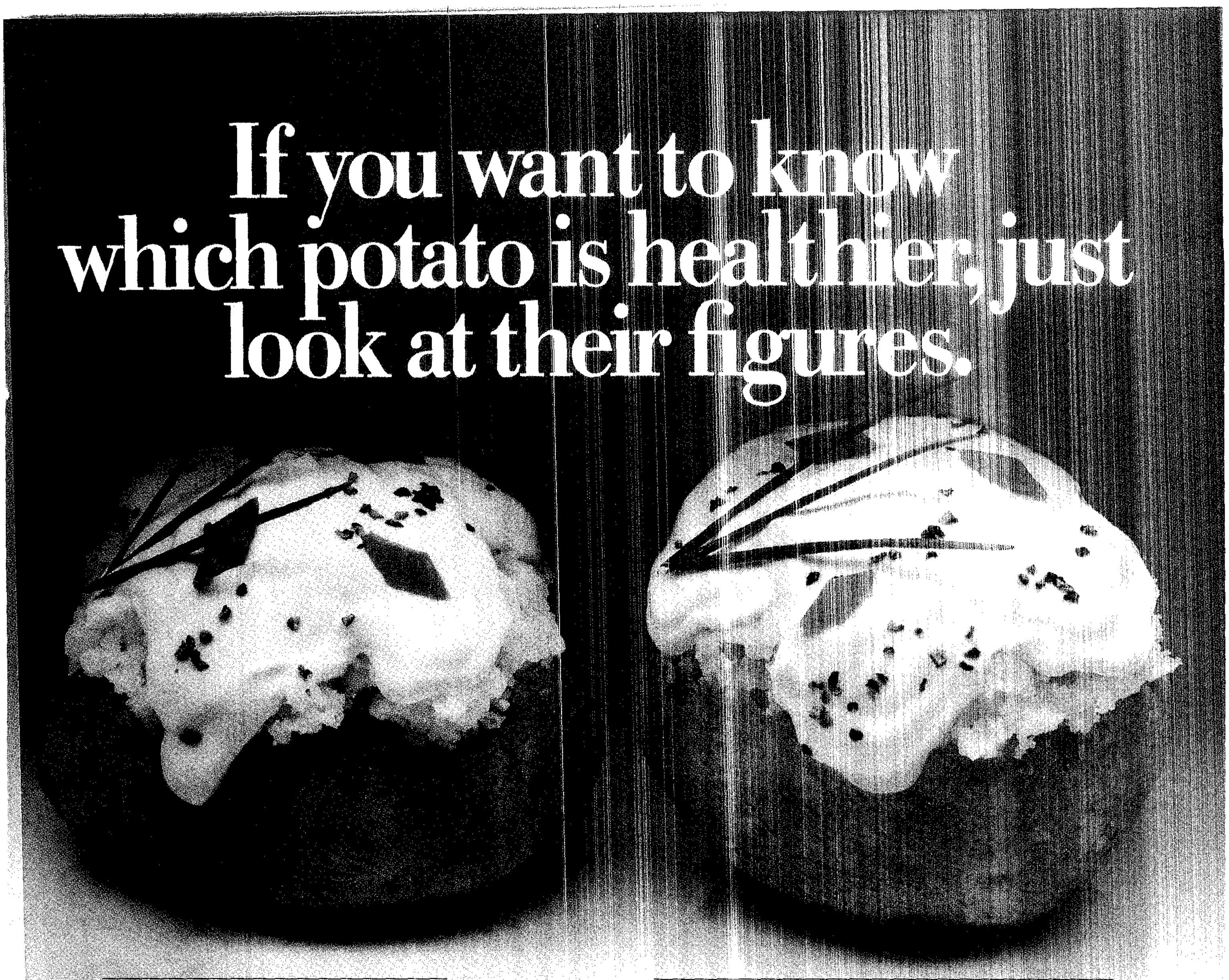
Cover Girl (1944)—The wartime plot about hoofers and models is a shambles, and there's a prolonged flashback to the Gay Nineties that is almost ruinous, but this big, flashy, Technicolor musical has a lot to recommend it: Rita Hayworth, Gene Kelly, Phil Silvers, and songs by Ira Gershwin and Jerome Kern, including "Put Me to the Test" and the slurpy but affecting "Long Ago and Far Away." Kelly and Silvers are a livelier team than Kelly and Hayworth, though she does look sumptuous, and her big smile could be the emblem of the period. The cast includes Lee Bowman, Otto Kruger, Eve Arden, Edward Brophy, Jinx Falkenburg, and dozens of celebrated models. Charles Vidor directed; Virginia Van Upp wrote the script; Stanley Donen, Kelly, Seymour Felix, and Jack Cole staged the dances; Nan Wynn dubbed Hayworth's singing.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; March 3-4.)

Dances with Wolves—Set during the Civil War, this big Indians-versus-Cavalry epic is like a New Age social-studies lesson. Kevin Costner, who directed and is the star, has an untroubled face and laid-back diction. As Lieutenant Dunbar, a Union officer, he sees that the Sioux have a superior culture and he changes sides. This is a nature-boy movie, a kid's daydream of being an Indian. When Dunbar has become a Sioux named Dances with Wolves, he writes in his journal that he knows for the first time who he really is. Costner has feathers in his hair and feathers in his head. He and his friend Michael Blake (who worked up the material with him in mind and then wrote the novel and the screenplay) are trying to show the last years of the Sioux as an independent nation from the Sioux point of view, and it's probably that sympathy for the Indians that the audience responds to. But Costner is a moviemaking novice: instead of helping us understand the Sioux, he simply makes the Sioux like genial versions of us. This three-hour Western weeper, with its sluggish action and poorly shaped scenes, was made by a bland megalomaniac. (The Indians should have named him Plays with Camera.) Shot in South Dakota; the wide-screen cinematography, by Dean Semier, is spacious and open at times, and there are fine images of buffalo pounding by. With Mary McDonnell, Maury Chaykin, Robert Pastorelli, Graham Greene as Kicking Bird, and Rodney A. Grant as Wind in His Hair.—P.K. (12/17/90) (Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews Tower East, and Loews Paramount.)

Duck Soup (1933)—The Marx Brothers in their greatest movie—a semi-surrealist farce about war. With Margaret Dumont, Edgar Kennedy, and Louis Calhern. The unsentimental screenplay is by Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby, who also did the songs. Directed by Leo McCarey.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Feb. 28.)

Edward Scissorhands—A Transylvanian castle rises high in the air out of the end of a bare, flat suburban street. One day, Peg Boggs, the Avon lady (Dianne Wiest, magically daffy), makes a call on the macabre, tumbledown place and discovers an adolescent fairy-tale boy, white-faced Edward (Johnny Depp), with two collections of long, sharp shears where his hands should be. (He was created in the castle's kitchen workshop by an aged inventor—Vincent Price, in flashbacks—who died before he could attach the hands he had prepared.) Peg invites the boy to come home with her. At first, this movie, directed by Tim Burton, has a lovely comic spirit, but

If you want to know which potato is healthier, just look at their figures.



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IN BRIEF—Cont'd

when the suburbanites think Edward is dangerous and turn against him, the material turns into cheesy, plot-centered melodrama. It has a central flaw: the idea of a boy who cuts when he wants to touch is pre-interpreted. He's the pure creative artist who can't be around people because he can't help hurting them; he's the woeful misunderstood kid. Edward is an emasculated Tim Burton—he's Burton saying, "I've always been a sweet guy." (The picture becomes Christmassy and angelic.) With Winona Ryder.—P.K. (12/17/90) (Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, and Worldwide Cinemas.)

The Godfather Part III—Lightning didn't strike three times. It's a big, ambitious project, and it looks like the first two "Godfather" movies, but the internal force has vanished, and the quality of feeling—what gave the films their lyricism and made the public bond with them—is gone. In the first two pictures the director, Francis Ford Coppola, took opportunistic, sensationalist material and turned it into drama. Now he doesn't transform the sensationalist material (the Corleones' involvement in Vatican swindles); he just presents it, with an aura of solemnity. With Al Pacino as the morose godfather, Andy Garcia as his successor, and Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, Eli Wallach, Joe Mantegna, Donal Donnelly, Raf Vallone, Bridget Fonda, Sofia Coppola, George Hamilton, Franc D'Ambrosio, and Helmut Berger. Written by the director and Mario Puzo.—P.K. (1/14/91) (Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews Festival, and Embassy 1.)

GoodFellas—The director, Martin Scorsese, gives you a lift. He loves the Brooklyn organized-crime milieu, because it's where distortion, hyperbole, and exuberance all commingle. The movie is about being cock of the walk, with banners flying and crowds cheering. Based on Nicholas Pileggi's nonfiction book "Wiseguy," it's a triumphant piece of filmmaking—journalism and sociology presented with the brio of drama. But the three major hoods, played by Ray Liotta, Robert De Niro, and Joe Pesci, don't have a strong enough presence, and the movie lacks the juice and richness that come with major performances. (It's like the Howard Hawks "Scarface" without Scarface.) What you respond to is Scorsese's bravura; the filmmaking process becomes the subject of the movie. Watching it is like getting strung out on pure sensation. Paul Sorvino as Paulie and Lorraine Bracco as Karen both come through, and other performers in minor roles give the movie a frenzied, funny texture. The screenplay is by Pileggi and Scorsese; the cinematography is by Michael Ballhaus; the editing is by Thelma Schoonmaker.—P.K. (9/24/90) (Eastside Cinema, Quad Cinema, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Olympia. Evenings only.)

Green Card—A limp, dispirited romantic comedy, written and directed by Peter Weir. A rather prissy horticulturist (Andie MacDowell) agrees to an in-name-only marriage to a Frenchman (Gérard Depardieu); he needs a green card to stay in New York, and she needs to show that she's married in order to get past the stuffy co-op board of the building in which she wants to buy an apartment. They meet (for the first time) at City Hall, do the deed, and separate, until several months later, when they're forced to pretend that their union is real—that they aren't strangers but devoted partners who know every little thing about each other. This is a serviceable premise for a screwball comedy, but the screwball is apparently not one of Weir's best pitches: the movie is as flat and lifeless as a hanging curve. Depardieu—as shaggy and hefty as ever—is a skillful comedian, and he looks as if he's having a great time. Not even his vivid presence is enough to rescue this wan little picture. Also with Bebe Neuwirth and Gregg Edelman.—T.R. (Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema II, Quad Cinema, Worldwide Cinemas, and Metro Cinema.)

The Green Pastures (1936)—The Angel Gabriel calls, "Gangway for de Lawd God Jehovah!" and then, more humbly, "Ten cent seegar, Lawd?" In this pop-folk fantasy of the Old Testament stories as a Negro child in the South (of an earlier period) might imagine them, Southern idiom, delicious fish fries, and naïve theology are fused with awe and wonder. Marc Connelly's adaptation of Roark Bradford's stories was perhaps the most famous and most popular of Negro stage productions; the screen version (which was also successful) was directed by William Keighley and Connelly, with Rex Ingram as De Lawd, Eddie (Rochester) Anderson, and Oscar Polk; the music is by Erich Wolfgang Korngold.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; March 1-2.)

The Grifters—This adaptation of one of the punchier pulp novels by Jim Thompson retains Thompson's hardboiled pitilessness. It's about three scam artists: tough, seductive Lilly (Anjelica Huston); her son, Roy (John Cusack), who won't have anything to do with her; and his bubbly bedmate, Myra (Annette Bening), a sex fantasy come to luscious life. These chisellers never got a break and don't give anybody else a break. The director, Stephen Frears, and the scriptwriter, Donald E. Westlake, are smart enough not to attempt to make a big thing out of this L.A. film noir. They keep it snappy, and heighten the sexual electricity. And they smack us with discord; we're watching a form of cabaret. Huston is astounding; you can see why the son is getting even with her by throwing his life away, and Bening's two-faced little-girl quality is just what film noir thrives on. (This is a picture with two competing femmes fatales.) It's thin stuff, but it's pretty terrific. (It even has great opening titles.) With Pat Hingle giving the performance of his life.—P.K. (11/19/90) (Bay Cinema, Coronet, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Hamlet—Franco Zeffirelli gives Shakespeare's tragedy the ripping-yarns treatment: a dashing star (Mel Gibson); lavish sets and costumes; a generous amount of swordplay and leaping about; and just enough text to enable the audience to follow the story. Zeffirelli and his co-screenwriter, Christopher De Vore, have cut the play to an acceptable prestige-picture running time of two hours and fifteen minutes; you get the feeling that they would have eliminated Hamlet's tortured, action-retarding soliloquies if they could have done so without losing all those famous lines. The movie isn't exactly dull, but it doesn't feel like "Hamlet," either. The play's alternating rhythms of action and reflection have been flattened to a single tempo, brisk but monotonous. Gibson's performance is competent and enjoyable. He isn't interesting, though, and that's probably not entirely his fault—the intellectual vacuity of the production leaves him stranded. Among the all-star supporting cast, Ian Holm (as Polonius) and Paul Scofield (as the ghost of Hamlet's father) do the best work. Also with Glenn Close (as Gertrude) and Helena Bonham-Carter (as Ophelia). Cinematography by David Watkin.—T.R. (Murray Hill Cinemas, 68th St. Playhouse, and 8th St. Playhouse.)

L.A. Story—Steve Martin wrote and stars in this romantic comedy—a take on "Annie Hall" that turns it inside out. What Martin loves about L.A. is what Woody Allen rejected it for: its pleasure-loving, materialistic irresponsibleness. For Martin, who grew up in Southern California, superficiality is the norm. This movie is totally inconsequential, and he accepts that—it doesn't bother him. As a clowning TV weatherman, Martin is split between his wonder-struck obsession with a British journalist, played by Victoria Tennant, and the carefree high of sex without love, represented by a bouncy nymph played (wonderfully) by Sarah Jessica Parker. The jokes spin by as if choreographed by summer breezes. If some of them aren't quite fresh, the movie is such a silly, light-headed joyride that you don't really mind. With a batch of sharp performers: Rick Moranis (uncredited), Marilu Henner as a tough dame with a cold stare, Susan Forristal as Martin's pal, M. C. Shan as a waiter-rapper, and Richard E. Grant, Kevin Pollak, and Patrick Stewart, among others. Artfully directed by the English TV ace Mick Jackson; with cinematography by Andrew Dunn, editing by Richard A. Harris, and a funny, lilting score by Peter Melnick.—P.K. (2/11/91) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Loews 19th Street East 6, Gemini, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Mr. & Mrs. Bridge—An adaptation, by the Merchant-Ivory team (the director James Ivory, the producer Ismail Merchant, and the writer Ruth Prawer Jhabvala), of Evan S. Connell's novels about the painfully respectable Bridge family of Kansas City. Walter and India Bridge (Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward) are pure exemplars of the middle: they're middle-aged and middle-class; they live in a medium-sized city in virtually the dead center of the United States; and they are neither truly happy nor consciously unhappy. They're monsters of moderation. At the beginning of the film, Ivory seems eerily in tune with the novels' distinctive sensibility. The picture gets by, initially, on its strange mood of chilling coziness, and when we tire of that—and we do, because it doesn't change or develop—the actors keep us engaged a while longer. Newman doesn't try to soften the character, or to distance himself from it with exaggerated effects, and his scrupulousness pays off. The character seems not more likable but more human than it does in the novels; by very simple means, Newman enables us to understand Mr. Bridge's insensitivity and emotional ineptitude. And Woodward, too, gives a delicate, subtle performance; she embodies a foolish woman vividly and unpatronizingly. But the screenplay retains the static quality of the books' construction, so at a certain point the

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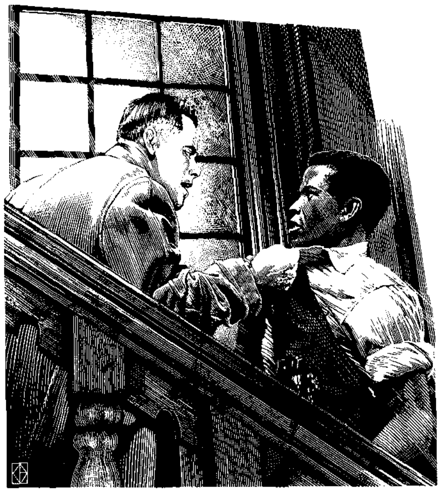
In the 1950 racial melodrama "No Way Out," Sidney Poitier made his début as a doctor whose clash with a black-hating psychopath (Richard Widmark) sparks an urban conflagration. But Poitier's career didn't kick into gear until he appeared as an alienated teen-ager in "The Blackboard Jungle," five years later. Both will be screened at Film Forum 2 on March 3 and 4, showcasing one of the most spectacular delayed launches in American movies.

Poitier was twenty-two when he played the lead in "No Way Out." He told the director, Joseph L. Mankiewicz, that he was twenty-seven, so he'd seem old enough to be an interne. His performing confidence is astounding, especially since he's surrounded by veteran film stars like Widmark and Linda Darnell, and more experienced stage actors like Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis. Playing a man who chooses to remain an interne for an extra year because he needs more seasoning, Poitier betrays no such insecurity as an actor. In "No Way Out" he creates the first of his controversial noble heroes—a doctor who remains a professional despite oppression. Some audiences hiss when they see him try to save the racist's life. Yet, Poitier conveys the anger beneath his civil surface. His last line to Widmark (the capper to the film)—"Don't cry, white boy, you're gonna live"—registers as a curse.

His role in "The Blackboard Jungle" was the opposite of the one in "No Way Out": he had to be younger and less educated instead of older and more educated. It gave him a chance to let his bottled-up juices pour out. Glenn Ford plays an embattled English teacher; Poitier is a born student leader who resists instruction. He imbues this juvenile semi-delinquent with a charged, street-smart wariness, and uses that quality to put Ford's naïve idealist on edge. Poitier's ardor takes the do-gooding onus off the rebellious kid's change of heart. He pulls off a bravura balancing act—alternately hot and, in a fifties sense, cool.



Glenn Ford and Sidney Poitier in "The Blackboard Jungle"

scenes begin to feel arbitrary. And Ivory's perspective on the material seems to become clouded by a storm of minutiae—a surfeit of period detail. (The action takes place in the late thirties and early forties.) In the end, the Bridges aren't large enough either to move us or to terrify us; they're the Ambersons without the magnificence. Also with Blythe Danner, Kyra Sedgwick, Robert Sean Leonard, Margaret Welsh, and Simon Callow.—T.R. (12/3/90) (Village East Cinemas, and Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

Reversal of Fortune—An entertainingly trashy sick-joke docudrama about how Claus von Bülow's conviction for trying to kill his superrich wife was overturned on appeal through the brainpower of the Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz and his team of students and former students. Jeremy Irons' von Bülow is a pop conception of a decadent aristocrat, and the crowd-pleasing satirical subtext is that the heirs and heiresses of the great fortunes are useless, bored, unloving, and unloved. The fun here is that Irons' performance is a masterly conceit. His von Bülow is a depraved cuckoo; he simply can't resist playing ghoulish comedian and making Dershowitz (Ron Silver) his stooge. The script, by Nicholas Kazan, is skillfully constructed, but it's based on Dershowitz's book about the case, and he's the protagonist—the crusading lawyer searching for evidence of innocence. Silver's Dershowitz seems to be overdosing on proud sentimental Jewishness. (That this is a positive stereotype makes it no less a stereotype.) The direction, by Barbet Schroeder, is assured but often impersonal and emptily energetic. With Glenn Close (very effective as Sunny Von Bülow, the comatose narrator), Christine Baranski as Andrea Reynolds, Julie Hagerty (uncredited) as Alexandra Isles, and Stephen Mailer, Annabella Sciorra, Uta Hagen, and Fisher Stevens. Music by Mark Isham.—P.K. (11/19/90) (Manhattan Twin, Quad Cinema, and Worldwide Cinemas.)

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead—The heroes of Tom Stoppard's 1967 play are a pair of marginal, forgettable characters from "Hamlet"—the school friends of the Prince who have been summoned by Claudius to help the King find out why his stepson is in such a bad mood. The conceit of the play is that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, those bozos in doublet and hose, have some sort of life independent of their brief appearances on the stage of a great tragedy. Stoppard's manner is that of an antic modernist, a meta-absurdist: his Rosencrantz and Guildenstern both evoke and send up the Beckett-influenced theatrical fashions of the late sixties. The title characters' exchanges are all undergraduate-philosophy jokes, and puns of the elaborate/inane variety favored by English cryptic crosswords. The shocking thing about this movie version, which was directed by the playwright, is that the material doesn't seem very funny anymore. Stoppard has "opened out" the play in all the conventional wrongheaded ways, and he doesn't seem to have a clue about where to point the camera. As a movie director, he doesn't know a hawk from a handsaw. He even manages to sabotage the Ping-Pong rhythms of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's comic set pieces: we rarely have the sense that the actors, Tim Roth and Gary Oldman, are playing off each other. (Oldman, who sometimes suggests Stan Laurel, succeeds in getting a few laughs anyway.) The movie is so lethargic and gloomy-looking that you'd think Stoppard didn't understand his own play; what he really doesn't understand is the movies. Also with Richard Dreyfuss and Ian Richardson.—T.R. (2/25/91) (Angelika Film Center, and Carnegie Hall Cinema.)

The Silence of the Lambs—Adapted from a novel by Thomas Harris, Jonathan Demme's thriller is artful pulp—tabloid material treated with intelligence and care and a weird kind of sensitivity. The heroine, Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster), is an earnest F.B.I. trainee who is selected to interview Dr. Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins), a psychiatrist who is also a famous mass murderer; her superiors hope that Lecter's twisted expertise can somehow be used to help them catch a serial killer known as Buffalo Bill, who flays his victims. In the course of the movie, these conversations between the trainee and the psychiatrist turn into edgy, complex transactions in which she reveals pieces of her inner life in return for his hints on how to find the killer. Hopkins plays the monster with a fine, cold relish; he gives the character a mesmeric animal stillness, the terrifying opacity of a cobra. And the impact of his performance is heightened by its contrast with everything surrounding it: the scrupulous realism of Demme's style, the mundane details of police procedure, and, in particular, the emotional transparence of the heroine. Demme keeps our attention on Starling and her shifting reactions to the world, and his most striking achievement in this picture is his direction of Jodie Foster. The trainee draws near Buffalo Bill with the hovering, darting motion of a moth around a flame, and Foster, with amazing delicacy, shows us the constant tension between the character's emotions and her actions—the omnipresent self-consciousness of inexperience. The suspense of this manhunt isn't of the straight-ahead kind we're used to: it's reflective, oscillating between approach and avoidance—it has an unnerving intimacy. Also with Scott Glenn, Ted Levine (as Buffalo Bill), Anthony Heald, and Brooke Smith. The screenplay, which is extremely faithful to the novel, is by Ted Tally. Cinematography by Tak Fujimoto; production design by Kristi Zea; score by Howard Shore.—T.R. (2/25/91) (Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews New York Twin, Waverly, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Loews Astor Plaza.)

Sleeping with the Enemy—Julia Roberts, as a frightened young wife who fakes her death and changes her identity to escape her rich husband (Patrick Bergin), a psychopathic perfectionist. Roberts is an incredible object—you can at least see why a perfectionist would want to hang on to her. But she's a blank goddess here, and the settings—Cape Cod and Cedar Falls, Iowa (both shot in North and South Carolina)—are uninspiring. The director, Joseph Ruben, does a smooth job, with snappy editing every time there's a cut to the enraged husband on the wife's trail. There are no surprise twists, though; the picture is a glossy combination of secondhand, showing-off-Julia scenes from "Pretty Woman" and secondhand scares from "The Stepfather." Ronald Bass's script, out of a novel by Nancy Price, is one letdown after another. With Kevin Anderson, Elizabeth Lawrence, and Nancy Fish. The score, by Jerry Goldsmith, keeps plugging away at ominousness.—P.K. (2/11/91) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Gotham Cinema, and Chelsea Cinemas. . . . ¶ Ziegfeld; through Feb. 28. . . . ¶ Criterion Center; starting March 1.)

Sparkle (1976)—As Sister, the hellbent lead singer of a trio (made up of the three daughters of a domestic servant), the young singer-actress Lonette McKee has the sexual brazenness that stars such as Susan Hayward and Ava Gardner had in their youth. Sister puts the dirty fun of sex into her songs, with the raw charge of a rebellious, nose-thumbing girl making her way. She's terrific, but she has barely had a taste of singing in public when she falls for a sadistic pusher who degrades her. She goes downhill unbelievably fast, and the picture loses its zing when the action shifts to the rise of her docile and dewy-eyed little sister, Sparkle (Irene Cara), who is guided by a hardworking, dimply manager (Philip Michael Thomas). His almost canine devotion defeats the attempts of gangsters to muscle in on her career. The director, Sam O'Steen, may have got a little carried away by the smoky theatrical milieu, but he keeps the movie full of atmospheric detail, and the tawdry black-vaudeville scenes have the teeming, bodies-spilling-out-the-edges quality of Toulouse-Lautrec. The crowded look of the film helps to compensate for the skeletonic Joel Schumacher script, which seems heavily indebted to the story of the Supremes. As a teen-age boy who nonchalantly steals a car to take Sister out, Dorian Harewood has the vitality to match McKee's. The songs are by Curtis Mayfield.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; March 2.)

Stormy Weather (1943)—Vague, wandering show-biz story—a fictionalized bio of Bill Robinson—but marvellous musical numbers. With Robinson, Fats Waller (doing "Ain't Misbehavin' "), Lena Horne, Cab Calloway, Dooley Wilson, Katherine Dunham and her dancers, the great Nicholas Brothers, Zutty Singleton, Ada Brown, Eddie (Rochester) Anderson, Benny Carter, and many other black performers and musicians. There are so many famous people in this movie that sometimes there are three or four "greats" packed together in the drably staged scenes. Andrew Stone directed, and Clarence Robinson and Nick Castle staged the dances. The script, by Frederick Jackson and Ted Koehler, is about as bad as a script can be.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; March 1-2.)

The Vanishing—George Sluizer's film has a simple, powerful thriller hook: a young Dutch woman, Saskia (the radiant Johanna Ter Steege), vacationing in the South of France with her boyfriend, Rex (Gene Bervoets), walks into a highway rest stop to buy soda and beer and never comes back. Rex's search for Saskia, which takes place over several years, produces suspense of an unusually melancholy kind. This fiendishly intelligent little movie is adapted from a novel called "The Golden Egg," by the Dutch writer Tim Krabbé (who collaborated with Sluizer on the adaptation), and its form is essentially literary. It's a sophisticated example of the sort of hermetic intellectual mysteries that Borges is famous for; the fates of Saskia and Rex are worked out with an almost geometric precision. But the movie's rigor isn't alienating, and its symmetries are evocative rather than merely clever. This film is about ordinary lives interrupted, hijacked out of time, and Sluizer, with documentary-style attentiveness to detail, does justice to the varied beauty of ordinariness. The narrative is constructed with flawless elegance, but the movie is far less self-contained than it seems; traces of deep feeling keep escaping from the artifice, like puffs of breath into cold, thin air, and these wispy, ephemeral indications of unself-conscious life haunt us when the story is over. Not many thrillers have the sort of suggestiveness this picture has. It's a small classic. Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu gives a chilling performance as the perverse, enigmatic villain. In Dutch and French.—T.R. (1/28/91) (Cinema 12.)

Vincent & Theo—The director, Robert Altman, and the screenwriter, Julian Mitchell, give us an interpretation of the bond that helps to keep Vincent alive while it tears Theo apart. Vincent is obsessive about his painting; Theo is obsessive about Vincent and about his own inability to sell Vincent's work and help him—he can give him only a pittance. This double Passion-play movie is very different from other Altman movies (even allowing for how different they are from each other). The theme—the bitter entanglement of art and commerce—is Altman's lifelong theme, and, staying with it strictly in terms of the van Gogh brothers, he's able to release his own feelings about how an artist's frustrations lead him to acts of self-destructive fury—cutting off his ear to spite his face. It's a movie about two sensualists made by a sensualist, who understands that their bond of love of art is also a bond of shared rage at the world of commerce. This daring film works on its own relentless, celebratory terms. With Tim Roth, whose acting is a form of kinetic discharge, as Vincent and Paul Rhys as Theo. The cinematography is by Jean Lepine, the production design is by Stephen Altman, the score is by Gabriel Yared; all three rise to the occasion.—P.K. (11/19/90) (Angelika Film Center.)

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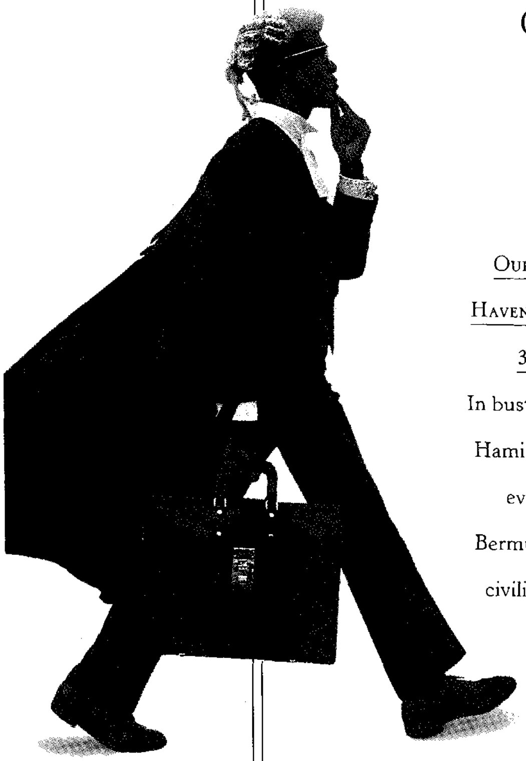

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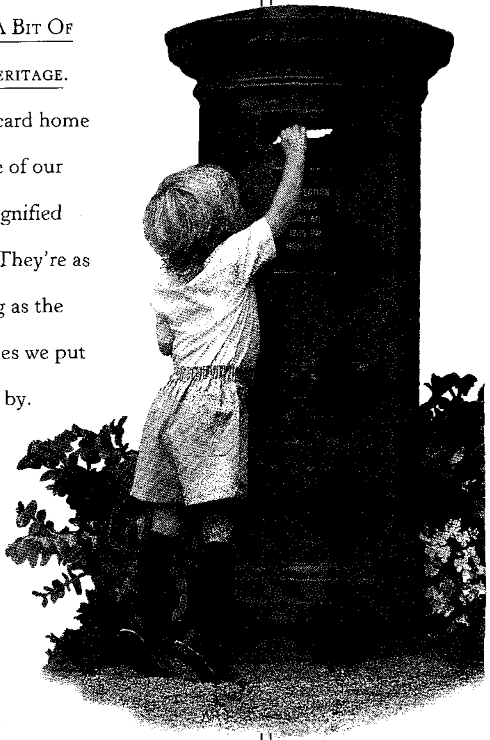

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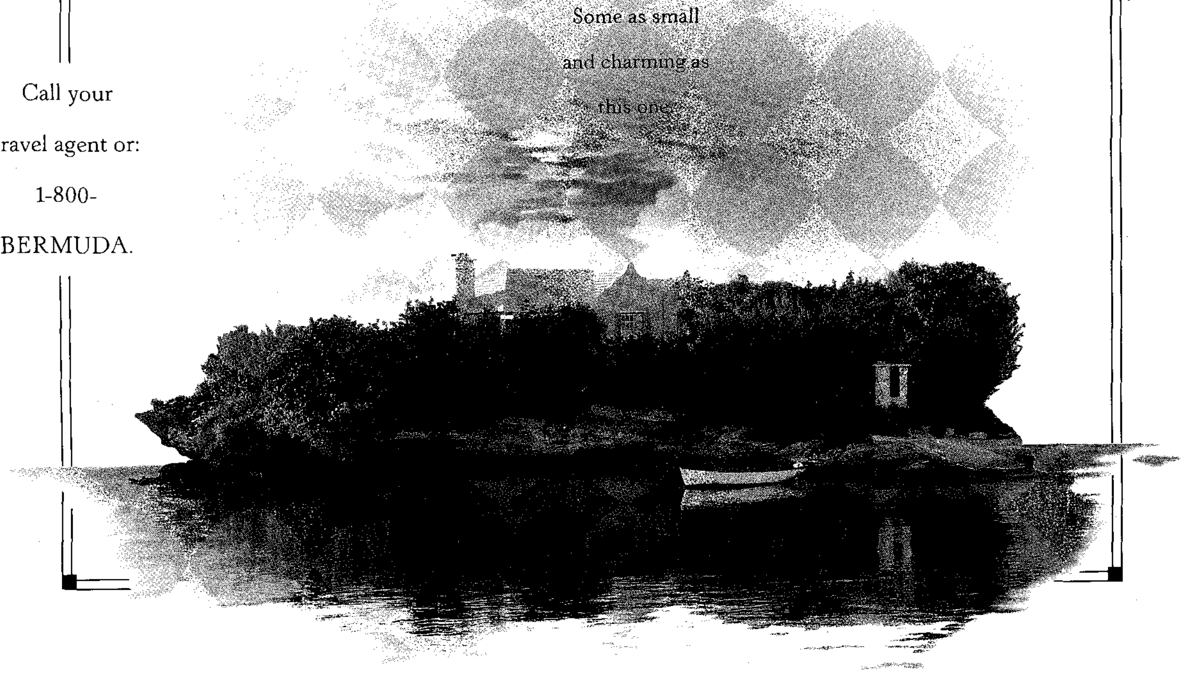

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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

THERE is enormous wisdom in the term "peacemaking," for peace, no less than war, is struggled toward, plotted, and achieved. Someday, real peace will come to the Middle East. But it will come only when the historical forces propelling the peoples of the region, and us along with them, have been met and faced squarely.

During the congressional debate on authorizing the use of military force in the Gulf, proponents and opponents hurled historical analogies at each other—or, rather, it usually seemed, right past each other. Some maintained that the world faced a situation analogous to that of Munich, 1938—that it was threatened by a power-mad and profoundly dangerous tyrant who would have to be stopped sooner or later. Others said that what lay ahead was another Vietnam—a long-drawn-out involvement in a distant part of the world on behalf of policy goals never clearly or consistently articulated. A third analogue, less frequently cited but perhaps equally apt, was that of August, 1914, when the rush to war came to be dictated by the sheer scale of preparations for war.

It was gratifying at the time to see Congress, which ordinarily seems hard-pressed to remember anything that happened before the last election, approaching this momentous decision with a certain sense of its historical dimension. Yet the repeated invoking of precedents during the debate grew a little disconcerting, for it tended to reduce historical memory to a set of disconnected moral lessons. History is a continuous process. The appeasement of 1938, for example, didn't come out of nowhere. Hitler's rise to power was one of many disastrous consequences of the botched and vengeful peace agreements that followed the First World War. And the peace agreements following the Second World War, while generally fairer, led to at least two problems of their own. The first—the division of Europe between the war's former allies—is at last beginning to be resolved. The second has thus far proved more intractable. The horrible revelations of Hitler's near-extermination of Europe's Jews forced the West to realize that the Jewish people were entitled to have—and, more than that, required—a state of their own, where they might live with a modicum of security. It might have made sense in the years after the war to carve that state out of Germany, which, after all, was indisputably the guilty party. Instead, of course, other historical forces led to its establishment in Palestine, and to a new legacy of grievances. The point is that none of these events are unrelated.

Similarly, to follow another strand of our century's dark tapestry, the proximate cause of the First World War was the ethnic conflicts in the Balkans—conflicts that had themselves grown out of the long-term decline of the Ottoman Empire. It is one of the few real achievements of this century's diplomatic history that the circuitry of European security is no longer hot-wired through the Balkans: the European powers decided that although that region might be subject to further upheaval they were no longer going to allow themselves to be drawn into it. Tragically, the same cannot be said about the Ottoman Empire's eastern flank. The largely arbitrary borders that were dictated by the victorious Allied powers—mainly the British—after the Ottoman collapse at the end of the First World War have given rise to endless problems in the region. And the discovery of oil there in the twenties has caused the instability of those borders to jeopardize the entire world's security. Denying the Iraqi nation its natural outlet to the sea (Iraq is essentially the plain through which the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flow toward the Persian Gulf) may have made some realpolitik sense to the British diplomats who contrived the border scheme, but it was bound to cause difficulties later on.

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In addition, the British policy of routing as much of the Gulf oil as possible through small, sparsely populated nations, usually with arbitrarily defined borders and headed by dynastic monarchs who could be relied upon to funnel most of their oil profits back through Western banks, has left a problematic legacy of its own. The Gulf region combines a virtually inexhaustible source of wealth—most of it tied up in tiny principalities like Kuwait and Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates—with horrendous destitution and underdevelopment in countries like Jordan and Egypt and Iraq. Saddam Hussein didn't invent that contradiction, even if his exploitation of it has been utterly cynical. In fact, the very existence of a Saddam Hussein to a large extent reflects the realities of that region, and its twentieth-century history. He did not invent the grievances there, and they will not simply disappear when he is eventually gone. In the Middle East, "linkage" is not some option to be debated. It is a simple fact. The only real question is how many more wars will have to be fought and how many more lives will have to be lost before that fact is recognized.

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Fun City

FOR a moment last week, Mark Pahlow thought he had left his eyeballs back home in Seattle. He looked through a pile of foam-rubber rocks and rummaged among some lobster-claw harmonicas, even patted down his own pockets: no eyes anywhere. Mr. Pahlow was in town for the American International Toy Fair, at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, where his company, Accoutrements, was marketing such novelties as squeaking artificial pickles and squirting calculators. This was the first year that Accoutrements, which sells to the trade, had occupied a booth at the Toy Fair, but Pahlow's merchandise, distributed to retail customers by mail from a Seattle store called Archie McPhee, had already made him something of a folk hero among connoisseurs of what the gift business knows as "stress-reduction toys." Mr. Pahlow, who dresses in elegant tweeds and speaks more like a sardonic philosopher than like a man with six-foot-long chartreuse snakes for sale, calls his stuff "quality schlock," and he is known for strict standards of taste: he will not handle whoopie cushions, plastic vomit, or sex jokes; he does carry rubber cockroaches and banana-nose eyeglasses. The eyeballs, made of heavy-duty rubber, are life-size, and alarmingly bloodshot. He finally found the missing set dangling from the pocket of a vest worn by one of his employees in the booth.

The eyeballs aren't available just any time of year. Like Beaujolais Nouveau, they have their season—in this case, because the Hong Kong eyeball-makers who supply Accoutrements are superstitious about surrounding themselves with lots of eyes when the lunar New Year is at hand. In Mr. Pahlow's business, the biggest challenge is finding dependable supplies of the right merchandise. When he started, in 1980, he built his inventory out of things he could buy cheap, because nobody else wanted them. (Once, to secure a bank loan, he offered eight hundred thousand plastic ants as collateral.) "I was a scavenger," he told us. "I went to warehouses in New York and Chicago and found Howdy Doody key rings and made-in-Japan metal windup toys. In the early eighties, most people hadn't yet realized that Japan was going high tech and wouldn't be making such things anymore. So I bought the Hot-Dog-Eating Man and sold him to stores for four dollars. They sold him for forty. Today, he is worth four hundred."

Some of Mr. Pahlow's triumphs have been serendipitous. Last year, he happened to have a load of chirping-cicada key rings, with blinking green eyes, for sale just as seventeen-year locusts began swarming through the Midwest. He could hardly keep his bugs in stock. He has also done extremely well with remaindered Ed Grimley effigies, based on the character created several years ago by the comedian Martin Short. "Grimley was like Batman and Dick Tracy," Mr. Pahlow explained. "He came and went like a comet and left a million toys behind. I cannot explain it, but we still sell Ed Grimleys by the dozen." Mr. Pahlow isn't so bullish on a character named Happy Face Bendy, a rubber man with a smiley yellow face, who once sold well but is now in little demand. "It will probably take me ten years to unload him," he said.

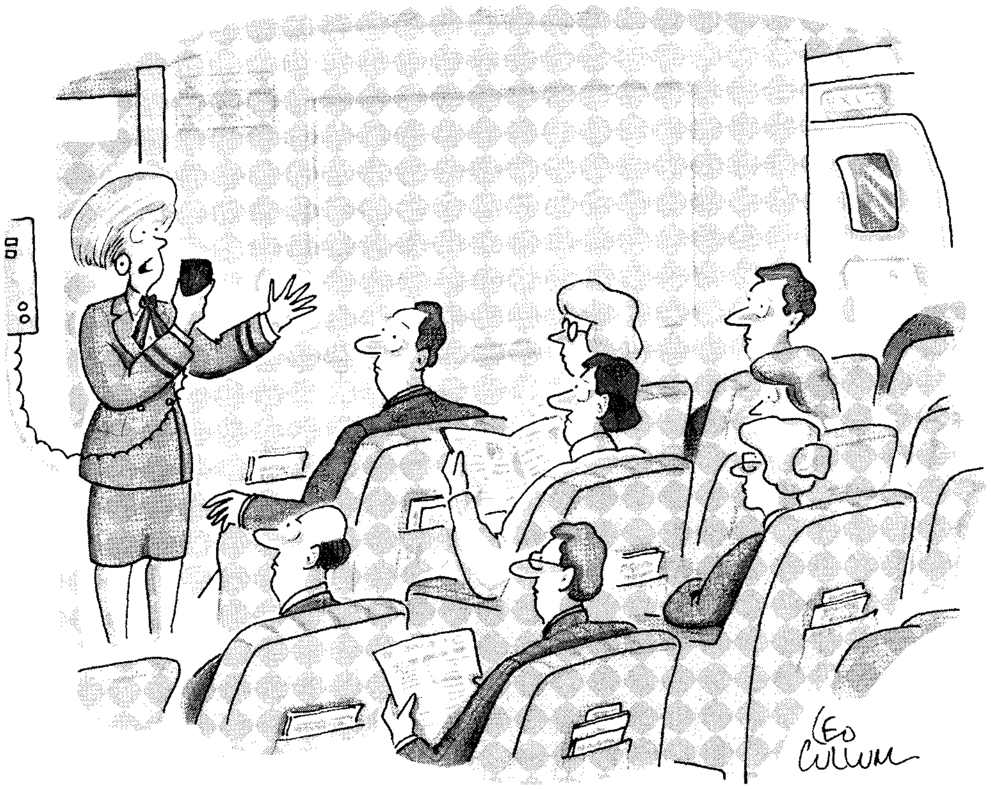
Mr. Pahlow has usually had good luck with men from outer space. The Bendable Alien, which he described as "a sort of flesh-colored humanoid originally made to cash in on 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind,' " was one of his first big hits. At this year's Toy Fair, he introduced the Martian Popping Thing (formerly known as an Obie)—a four-inch-tall soft-rubber orange doll with no limbs. When the doll is squeezed, its eyes, nose, and ears bulge astonishingly. "It was called Aliko and marketed as a baby toy when we came across it in Taiwan," Mr. Pahlow said. "We put it in a great new box and have high hopes for it. I expect it to do well in hospital gift stores. Heart patients need something to squeeze to get their circulation going. The Martian Popping Thing is perfect for them."

LOCAL DELIVERY

The big surprise Accoutrements was springing at the Toy Fair was news about its rubber chicken. Mr. Pahlow has always boasted that his rubber chickens, handmade in Spain, are the world's best, and genuine Barcelonan rubber chickens were dangling in the booth. But Mr. Pahlow now revealed that henceforth he will be selling only Taiwanese rubber poultry. "The dollar had got very weak in Europe," he said. "Besides, the people who make rubber chickens in Spain are simply not reliable, so we had to change to maintain our line of supply. And I believe our new chickens are up to par. They have excellent goose bumps, and that is the true sign of quality."

Realism is an important issue to Mr. Pahlow, but he isn't always bound by it. Consider, for example, his brains. "I think they are beautiful," he said. "So nicely convoluted." He hefted a rubber cerebrum from the Accoutrements display table and asked us to admire its weight. It was substantial, and had a suitably ghastly gummy feel, but we couldn't help noting that the gray matter seemed squeezed, as if the noggin around it had spent too much time in tight earmuffs. Mr. Pahlow confessed that narrowness wasn't the brain's only defect. "We have a neurosurgeon who buys these all the time, but complains," he said. " 'Brains are white,' she tells us, and she's an expert. But I know my customers. They want gray brains."

Mr. Pahlow said that he has lately found fewer warehouses filled with fabulous gimcracks, and that although he continues to haunt surplus shows for undiscovered treasures he increasingly sells Accoutrements originals. One exclusive product this year is a decorated slap bracelet, made in Taiwan to Pahlow's designs. The repertoire of panoramic motifs available on the bracelets includes a parade of insects, a tadpole-to-frog procession, a school of assorted fish, bunches of green geckos, and a slug with a trail of yellow slime behind it. The inside of each bracelet is inscribed with a nine-inch ruler. "These days everything has to have an educational edge," Mr. Pahlow said. "Frivolity was fine for the eighties, but not any longer. Even our singing frog comes with six 'Fascinating Frog Facts' on its back, and our human-skeleton-part key chains—feet, hands, pelvis, or backbone—are anatomically correct. This all makes it even more fun for me, because I am in love with the natural world."



"Ladies and gentlemen, is there a bankruptcy attorney on board?"

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Janáček

WITH "Káťa Kabanová," Leoš Janáček's powerful story of a Russian Madame Bovary, coming to the Metropolitan Opera at last, we thought that it would be appropriate to have a chat with the one man in New York who was present, so to speak, at the creation. He is the distinguished Czech pianist Rudolf Firkušný, who, at the age of nine, was sitting in Janáček's box at the National Theatre in Brno on November 23, 1921, the night of the opera's première. Seventy years later, Mr. Firkušný—gray-haired and radiating courtly Czech charm—still has vivid memories of that historic event and of the man who virtually created his concert career. When we called on him the other day at his apartment, on the West Side—in a living room that contained a Steinway, an arrangement of low, modern furniture, and a lot of Janáček memorabilia—he explained that after his father's premature death Janáček had agreed to supervise his musical education. "This was in Brno, the Moravian capital," he said. "Janáček, who was already famous for his third opera, 'Jenůfa,' was head of the Brno Organ School. I had been playing the piano, mostly from memory, for a couple of years, and when I was five my mother took me to Janáček for an audition. We were poor, and she knew that he, too, came from a poor family, so she thought he might take an interest in me. I played a melody from 'Jenůfa' and then one of Dvořák's 'Slavonic Dances,' and I remember he shouted 'No, it's too slow!' and rushed to the piano to play the piece at its proper tempo. Then he tested me with chords and found that I had absolute pitch. So he told my mother that he thought I had talent and that he would guide my studies and find me a good piano teacher. 'There is only one condition,' he said. 'It is that he will not become a child prodigy.' "

Mr. Firkušný took lessons with Janáček twice a week for the next ten years, and the lessons often included afternoon tea. "We began with music theory—following his controversial ideas about harmony and composition," he said. "I would bring him small piano pieces, and he would discuss and correct them. As I got older, we played and analyzed scores together on the piano. One day, I remember, I played with him the first pages of 'Káťa Kabanová,' because he was correcting proofs of the printed score at the time. When I was invited to sit in his box for the première of 'Káťa,' some of my mother's friends said, 'You shouldn't allow this innocent child to attend such an immoral opera.' In Brno, everybody knew about everything in advance. But I insisted on going, and I was placed at the front of the box with Janáček's wife, Zdenka, while he sat on a small couch in the shadows at the back. The music was overwhelming. I think I became so excited that I was perhaps a little sick. People came by during the intervals to see Janáček, and at the end he took many bows onstage. Of course, I was too young to appreciate the problems of his marriage and the tensions that must have been present in the box that night. When I met Janáček, he was in his sixties. He was stocky, with a fine head, piercing dark eyes, and thick white hair. With me he was absolutely angelic, but when he was younger he had a reputation for wild, unconventional behavior. And everybody knew he was fond of women. 'Káťa' and the operas that came after it were inspired by his love for Kamila Stösslová, a much younger married woman he met in 1917. By all accounts, she was a rather simple person—lighthearted and amusing—and I don't think she ever realized what a great composer he was. But his devotion to her gave him the extra vitality that made it possible for him to write four amazing operas—'Káťa,' 'The Cunning Little Vixen,' 'The Makropulos Affair,' and 'From the House of the Dead'—at the end of his life." (Janáček composed all of them between 1919 and 1928, the year of his death.)

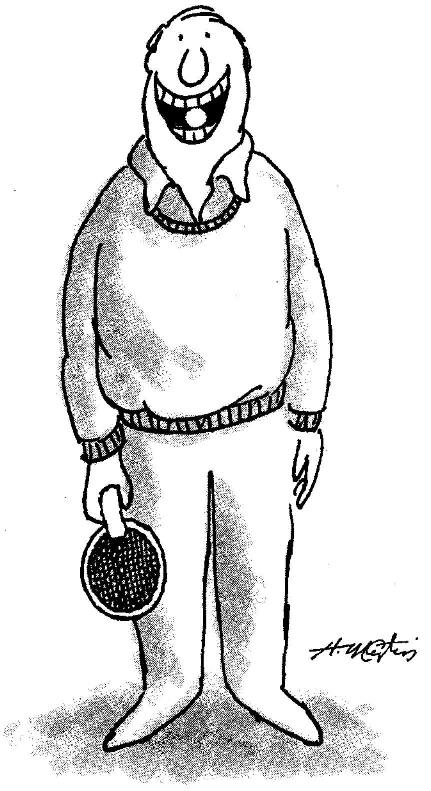
We asked Mr. Firkušný, who keeps in his repertoire the small number of pieces that Janáček wrote for piano, to define the composer's musical style.

"It is basically conservative and tonal, but is strongly influenced by Moravian folk melodies and patterns of human speech," he said. He showed us a series of framed musical scribbles by Janáček hanging on a wall opposite the sofa, and explained that Janáček often jotted down musical ideas on scraps of paper while he was walking in the park. "Nobody can really read them, but they're probably notes about folk songs or conversations in the local dialect," he said. "Janáček could not escape the influence of Brahms and Wagner, but he was such a natural talent that, musically speaking, he went his own way. He preferred Dvořák to Smetana, and the Russians to the Germans, and he was very fond of Puccini, especially 'Madama Butterfly.' Although his musical language can be deliberately rough, there is an Italian lyrical quality to some of it—Káťa's soliloquy, for example, before the garden scene. The orchestration is usually rather simple. With Strauss and Mahler, you know, the music can be wonderful or not so wonderful, but the orchestration is always dazzling. With Janáček, there is no hiding behind a façade. The music comes out spontaneously as he feels it. Since he often writes in difficult keys—'Jenůfa' and 'Vixen' are in A-flat minor, and 'Káťa' is in B-flat minor—the scores are sometimes changed and reorchestrated to make them sound smoother. But the minute things are put together *too* nicely the music loses its strength. It ceases to be Janáček."

Three years after the "Káťa" première, Mr. Firkušný was back in the Janáček box for the première of "The Cunning Little Vixen," an opera that is notoriously difficult to stage, because the singers portray birds and animals as well as people. "The opera management thought 'Vixen' was too short," he said. "So they added a ballet about animals, which had music by the then relatively unknown Bohuslav Martinů. Years later, Martinů, who had become a good friend of mine, asked me if Janáček had made any comment on his music that night. I had to tell him that I didn't hear him say a word about the score. But during the ballet Janáček leaped up from his couch in a fury that surprised everybody. He said, 'I want to know why *his* rooster has a better costume than *my* rooster!' "

Inventions

CATCHING rats with T. Kell's ratcatcher (patented in 1838) required a high degree of determination on the part of the rats. A victim had to walk without suspicion into a rectangular wire enclosure and gnaw on a piece of bait while standing on a metal plate. By doing that, the rat tripped a counterweighted lever, closing a door behind itself and opening a door in front. After eating some—but not all—of the bait, the rat had to squeeze through the newly opened door and step on a second metal plate, causing the counterweighted lever to rock back to its original position. This closed the second door and opened the first, thus resetting the trap. Then, while a second rat entered the first door and began to gnaw at what was left of the bait, the first rat had to squeeze through both a metal gate and a fearsome-looking funnel-like opening made of lengths of sharpened wire, to emerge into a removable wire cage. There it remained, along with any succeeding victims, ready to bite the fingers of anyone who attempted to remove the cage.



TED WALDERMAN: THE PING-PONG YEARS

We have never seen T. Kell's patented ratcatcher catch rats, but we did examine a model of it recently. The model was on display at the Cooper Union, as part of an exhibition called "A Better Mousetrap: Patents and the Process of Invention." The main part of the exhibition consisted of more than a hundred patent models dating from the nineteenth century. (Inventors submitted models with their patent applications until 1880, when the United States Patent Office, which had by then been in operation for ninety years, ran out of storage space.) Other parts of the exhibition included a time line depicting the history of patents, a series of displays having to do with various patent-related legal issues, and an inventors' hall of fame.

We began our tour in the hall of fame. The inventors enshrined there included Thomas Edison, George Washington Carver, Chester Carlson (the inventor of xerography), the Wright brothers, Peter Cooper (the founder of the Cooper Union, and the inventor of, among other things, a device for making powdered eggs), and Nikola Tesla. Tesla, whose inventions include many elements of the modern system of generating, transmitting, and using electric power, is our favorite inventor. He was born in 1856, in what is now Yugoslavia, and he emigrated to New York in 1884. He couldn't tolerate the sight of pearl earrings, the smell of camphor, the act of shaking hands, or close exposure to the hair of other people. He strongly favored numbers that were divisible by three. He seldom ate or drank anything without first calculating its volume. He counted his steps. He washed his hands compulsively. He never married, but he told a friend he had once loved a particular pigeon "as a man loves a woman." When he dined, alone, at Delmonico's or in the Palm Room of the Waldorf-Astoria, he ordered ahead by telephone, arrived at exactly eight, used eighteen linen napkins to wipe germs from the silver and crystal at his place, and left at exactly ten.

Studying the patent time line, which covered one wall of a long corridor, we concluded that all the easy inventions have already been invented. The cast-iron plow

(1797), the washing machine (1827), the toothpaste tube (1841), the safety pin (1849)—any one of these relatively straightforward innovations might, under certain circumstances, have occurred to us. But the gyrocompass (1918), the cyclotron (1934), sulfa quinoxaline (1946), the integrated circuit (1961), a new kind of mouse (1988), and most other inventions of this century are way over our head. The Patent Office issues between seventy-five and a hundred thousand patents each year. It issues none of them to us.

"I'm sorry, Rhett, but now *I* *don't give a damn."*

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In the main part of the exhibition, we paused first near a group of models that had a medical theme. We saw a hernia truss, a vacuum contraption that was supposed to suck diseases out of sick people, and quite a few aritificial limbs. Most of the artificial limbs dated from around the time of the Civil War. (According to an essay in the catalogue that accompanied the show, nearly half of Mississippi's 1866 budget was spent on prostheses.) There were also several arresting medical photographs, which had been included to give the viewer some idea of what inspired these devices; there was one of a pile of amputated legs, one of a roomful of cadavers, and two of a half-naked sailor who, a caption said, had been "wounded while fighting pirates."

Much of one wall was devoted to models of swings and other recreational equipment; according to the catalogue, "dozens and dozens" of swings were patented during the nineteenth century. Some of the swings appeared to have been conceived for the purpose of creating business for the inventors of artificial limbs. In one such device—patented by E. A. Tuttle in 1873—a small wooden seat was suspended above six large metal springs. As the swinger skimmed back and forth above them, the springs, which were stretched horizontally within a rectangular wooden frame, would have snapped like hungry crocodiles. Another recreational device, a sort of elaborate rocker, patented in 1872, was designed in such a way that any child riding in it would have been in danger of being ejected face first into the rocking mechanism.

At the other end of the room was a model of an apparatus called a pigeon starter. It had been created by Dr. Henry A. Rosenthal, a resident of Brooklyn, in 1875. The invention consisted of a wooden frame on which was mounted a figure resembling a small toy dog or woolly lamb. When a spring-loaded mechanism was activated, it thrust the figure forward in a way that Dr. Rosenthal believed to be highly upsetting to pigeons. The purpose of the invention was to make pigeons fly without hesitation from a cage in which they had been confined, so that they could be shot by sportsmen. Previously, Dr. Rosenthal wrote in his patent application, startling pigeons for this purpose had been notoriously difficult. Quite often, insufficiently startled pigeons would either remain in their cage or leave it on foot. "Neither of these troubles can happen when my improved starter is used," Dr. Rosenthal asserted.

The mousetraps that gave the show its name were just around the corner from the pigeon starter. One of the traps looked like a flour sifter. Two looked like cheese graters. One looked a great deal like the kind of mousetrap that most people buy nowadays, except that it had a small mirror mounted behind its bait holder. The mirror was meant to engender feelings of reckless competitiveness in any mouse that peered into it. When approaching mice see their own reflections, the trap's label explained, "they naturally think the other mouse is after the bait and do their best to get it themselves." It was this fact that gave the Mirror Trap Company the confidence to declare its product "THE QUICKEST AND SUREST TRAP ON EARTH"—a claim that was probably as true in the nineteenth century as it is today.

THE VERY COMICAL LAMENT OF PYRAMUS AND THISBE

(An Interlude)

> Wall: Thus have I, Wall, my part dischargèd so;
> And being done, thus Wall away doth go.
> —"*A Midsummer Night's Dream,*" *Act V, Scene 1.*

Thisbe: It's not here anymore.

Pyramus: It separated us. We yearned for each other. We grew apart.

Thisbe: I was always thinking about it.

Pyramus: I thought you were thinking about me.

Thisbe: Ninny! (*Gives him a kiss.*) How often have I reassured you. But I'm talking about what I didn't say. With every sentence I uttered, there was another, unspoken half sentence: "And the wall . . . " Example: I'm going to the Paris Bar.

Pyramus: "And the wall . . . "

Thisbe: Example: What's playing at the Arsenal tonight?

Pyramus: "And the wall . . . "

Thisbe: Example: It's terrible for the Turks in Kreuzberg.

Pyramus: "And the wall . . . "

Thisbe: Exactly.

Pyramus: It was a tragedy. Will it be a comedy now?

Thisbe: We won't become normal, will we?

Pyramus: Does this mean we can do whatever we want?

Thisbe: I'm starting to feel a little nostalgic. Oh, the human heart is a fickle thing.

Pyramus: Thisbe!

Thisbe: Not about you, belovèd! You know I'll always be yours. I mean, you'll be mine. But of course that's the same, isn't it? No, I'm thinking about . . . you know. I miss it a little.

Pyramus: Thisbe!

Thisbe: Just a little. (*Sees* Pyramus *frowning.*) Smile, darling. Oh, you people are so serious!

Pyramus: I've suffered.

Thisbe: So have I, in my way. Not like you, of course. But it wasn't always easy here, either.

Pyramus: Let's not quarrel.

Thisbe: *We* quarrel? Never! (*Sound of wall-peckers*) Listen! What an amazing sound!

Pyramus: I wish I'd brought my tape recorder. It's a Sony.

Thisbe: I'm glad you can buy whatever you want now. I didn't realize you were *so* poor.

Pyramus: It was awful. But, you know, it was good for my character.

Thisbe: You see? Even you can feel rueful. An American artist warned me last year, You'll miss this wall. (*She spies some wall-peckers spraying their hoard of pieces of the wall with paint.*) They're improving it.

Pyramus: Let's not be nostalgic.

Thisbe: But you agree there's something to be said for it. It made us different.

Pyramus: We'll still be different.

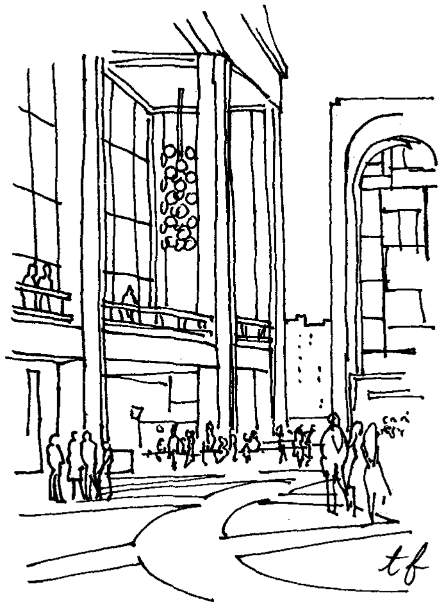
Thisbe: I don't know. So many cars. So much trash. The beggars. Pedestrians don't wait at corners for the green light. Cars parked on the sidewalk.

Enter the Spirit of New York.

Spirit: O city, I recognize you. Your leather bars, your festivals of independent films, your teeming dark-skinned foreigners, your real-estate predators, your Art Deco shops, your racism, your Mediterranean restaurants, your littered streets, your rude mechanicals—

Thisbe: No! Begone! This is the Berkeley of Central Europe.

Spirit: Central Europe: a dream. Your Berkeley: an interlude. This will be the New York of Europe—it was ever meant to be so. Only postponed for a mere sixty years.



Spirit of New York *vanishes.*

Thisbe: Well, I suppose it won't be too bad. Since New York isn't America, this city still won't be—

Pyramus: Sure, provided it stays shabby as well as full of unwelcome foreigners. (*Sighs.*) Let's not be too hopeful.

Thisbe: Oh, let's be hopeful. We'll be rich. It's only money.

Pyramus: And power. I'm going to like that.

Thisbe: We're not getting anything we don't deserve. We're together. We're free.

Pyramus: Still, everything is going too fast. And costing too much.

Thisbe: No one can make us do what we don't want as long as we're together.

Pyramus: I'm having a hard time thinking of those less fortunate than we are. But sometimes we'll remember, won't we.

Thisbe: I want to forget these old stories.

Pyramus: History is homesickness.

Thisbe: Cheer up, darling. The world is divided into Old and New. And we'll always be on the good side. From now on.

Pyramus: Goethe said—

Thisbe: Oh, not Goethe.

Pyramus: You're right.

Thisbe: In Walter Benjamin's last—

Pyramus: Not Benjamin, either!

Thisbe: Right. (*They fall silent for a while.*) Let's stroll.

They see a procession of venders, including some Russian soldiers, coming across an empty field.

Pyramus: And to think *that* was no man's land.

Thisbe: What are they selling?

Pyramus: Everything. Everything is for sale.

Thisbe: Do say it's better. Please!

Pyramus: Of course it's better. We don't have to die.

Thisbe: Then let's go on celebrating. Have some champagne. Have a River Cola.

They drink.

Pyramus: Freedom at last.

Thisbe: But don't toss your can on the ground.

Pyramus: What do you take me for?

Thisbe: Sorry. It's just that—I'm sorry. Yes, freedom.

Curtain.

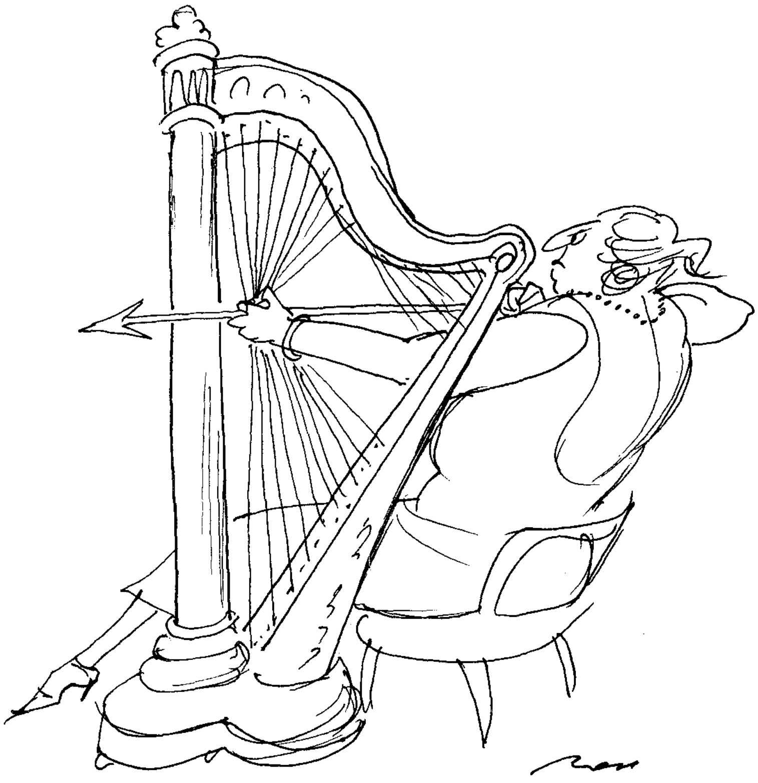
—Susan Sontag

MOST BELOVED

AT night spring blows through Leningrad. River wind, garden wind, and stone wind collide, whirl together, and race through the empty troughs of the streets, shatter the glass of attic windows and lift the damp, limp sleeves of laundry drying between rafters; the winds fling themselves flat on the ground, soar up again and take off, speeding the scents of granite and budding leaves out to the night sea where, on a distant ship, a sleepless traveller crossing the night will raise his head, inhale the arriving air, and think, Land.

But by early summer the city begins to wear on the soul. In the pale evening you stand at the window above the emptying street and watch the arc lamps come on quietly—one moment they're dead and silent and then suddenly, like a sickly technological star, a rosy manganese point lights up, and it swells, spills, grows, and brightens until it shines full strength with a dead, lunar whiteness. Meanwhile, outside of town the grasses have already quietly risen from the earth, and without a thought for us the trees rustle and the gardens change flowers. Somewhere out there are dusty white roads with tiny violets along their shoulders, the swish of summer stillness at the summit of century-old birches.

Somewhere out there our dacha is aging, collapsing on one side. The weight of February snows has crushed the roof, winter storms have toppled the double-horned chimney. The window frames are cracking, and weakened diamonds of colored glass fall onto the ground, onto the brittle litter of two years' flowers, onto the dry muddle of spent stems; they fall with a faint chime no one will hear. There's no one to weed out the stinging nettle and goosefoot or sweep the pine needles from the rickety porch, no one to open the creaky, unpainted shutters.



There used to be Zhenechka for all this. Even now it seems she might be limping along the garden path, in her hand the first bouquet of dill, raised like a torch. Perhaps she is actually somewhere around here right now, only we can't see her. But the cemetery is definitely not the right place for her—for anyone else in the world, yes, but not for her. After all, she meant to live forever, until the seas dried up. It never even crossed her mind that she could stop living, and, truth be told, we too were certain of her immortality—as we were of our own, for that matter.

LONG, long ago, on the far side of dreams, childhood reigned on earth, the winds slept quietly, and Zhenechka was alive. . . . And now, paging through the herbarium of bygone days, memory fondly returns time and again to the same pressed leaf: the first morning at the dacha.

On the first morning at the dacha, the damp glassed-in veranda still swims in green, underwater shadow. The front door is open wide, cold creeps in from the garden; the empty, resonant pails are in place, ready for a run to the lake, to the smooth, blinding lake, where the reflected world fell upside down in the early morning hours. The old pail gurgles, a distant echo gurgles. You ladle the deep, cold silence, the stilled, smooth surface, and sit for a while on a fallen tree.

Cars will soon start honking outside the gates of the dachas, summer folk will pour out of the automobiles, and, sighing and moaning, a taxi-truck will turn around in the narrow, wooded dead end of the road, scraping the low branches of maples, breaking off the fragile flowering elder. It will give a gasp of blue smoke and fall quiet. In the returning silence the only sound will be the thunder of the truck's wood side panels dropping, and on its high platform strangers' belongings, crowned with an upturned Viennese chair, will be shamelessly revealed.

And one automobile will drive straight through the gates, and from its wide-flung door will emerge a firm, elderly hand gripping a walking stick, then a leg in a high-buttoned orthopedic shoe, then a small straw hat with a black ribbon, and finally smiling Zhenechka herself, who will straightaway cry out in a high voice, "Look at the lilacs!" and then, "My suitcases!" But the bored driver will already be standing with the canvas bags in both hands.

Zhenechka will hurry into the house, exclaiming loudly over the aromas of the garden; she'll push open the casements impatiently, and with both hands—strong like a sailor's—pull branches of lilac into the rooms, their cold, purple loaves rustling with noisy importance. Then she'll hurry to the sideboard to see whether the winter mice have broken her favorite cup, and the cabinet will grudgingly open its swollen doors, behind which Zhenechka's treasure whiled away the January nights alone in the stale, empty depths with a graying, forgotten cookie.

She will walk through the rooms, as yet unwarmed by the sun; she'll unpack, hand out presents crackling with paper, shake fruit fudge and sweet cakes from packets, cram the corners of the rooms with wildflowers, hang our smiling photographs above her bed; then she'll clear the desk and stack it with textbooks, dictionaries, and dictation books. Not a single idle day will she allow us; she'll sit us each down for at least an hour of lessons geared to our respective ages.

"But we are legion—you can't teach us all!" We'll wriggle and hop about in front of Zhenechka.

"Yes I can," she'll answer calmly, looking for the inkwell.

"Take pity on yourself," someone will whine. "Like Pushkin says, we're disgusting, lazy—no curiosity . . . "

"All of you are going to grow up to be educated people."

"*We won't grow up! We're slaves to* our stomachs! We're denizens of the dark kingdom! Take the books and burn them all!"

"Never mind, we'll manage." And she'll seize us roughly and kiss us each harshly with a convulsive love that we accept indulgently: all right, sure, let her love us. Already she's dragging the first victim to her lesson, saying, as always, "I taught your mama, you know. Your grandmother and I were childhood friends. . . . " And on her chest, in the folds of her dress, her hearing aid begins to chirr like a nightingale—the hearing aid that for some reason never works quite right. Well, then, we're back to lessons again, exercises and dictation; once again, sitting in the creaky wicker armchair, propping her bad leg against the walking stick, Zhenechka, in her measured voice, will start turning us into educated people, and with the heedlessness of childhood we will again start to bait her. We'll crawl into the room where the current captive languishes at the copybook; we'll crouch behind Zhenechka's armchair—her hunched linen back, her clean soap smell, the willow creak—and take advantage of her deafness to prompt the giggling victim with wrong or indecent or ridiculous answers, or pass notes with calls to rebel against the slave driver, until Zhenechka notices something's up and, all adither, banishes the spies.

And beyond the windows, beyond the tinted panes: a fresh, flowered stillness, warm shadows beneath the pines, and the midday lake filled with blue, glinting through the boughs. But here we are, locked indoors with the table covered in green blotting paper, the thumbtacks rusted over the winter, the ink stains bleeding an official-looking lilac rainbow. And everything Zhenechka says is boring, correct, old. If only she'd go into the garden, or go drink coffee!

"Zhenechka, how much longer?"

"Underline the subject with one line, the predicate with two. . . . "

"Zhenechka, the summer will be over!"

The willow armchair gives a heavy sigh, the blue eyes gaze with calm reproach, the patient voice says, "There's a time to sow and a time to reap. . . . Sluggards never make scholars. . . . Live and . . . "

Ohh, isn't there something she's dying to do?

The evening fades, the dust on the road grows cold, dogs bark far away. We lie in our beds on cool pillows, listening to the sighs and purrs of the day winding down, the whispers of doors, muffled laughter. From the attic —lighter than shadow, quieter than dust—dreams descend, confusing what has been with what never was.

Knocking, squeaking, and rustling, groping through the twilight of the house, Zhenechka makes her way to our beds, settles in and takes up an unending story about bygone years—about the children she taught and loved, about the wind that scattered them throughout the wide world: some disappeared; some grew up and forgot; some returned to dust. Dreams swirl like a warm shadow; from the invisible cloud of soap and mint only her voice emerges, sympathetic and soft, cooing and enraptured, like a blissful June day. Transparent visions float in dozing waters: a boy surfaces, a faraway, dark-eyed, light-haired, antique boy, who long, long ago lay just like this in a dizzyingly distant white bed and listened to the murmur, the rise and fall of Zhenechka's voice—a boat rocking on waves of drowsiness. His eyes fluttered shut, his fingers relaxed, his speechless lips parted—for the dark-eyed boy was mute. That's why Zhenechka was asked to come: to pity, love, and care for him; to croon lullabies and babble fairy tales about dark forests, about the cat and the wolf, about the seven orphaned goats; and, as the boy fell asleep, his muteness mingled with the night's, and his bed set sail under the low vault of dreams.

Zhenechka had been in our house from time immemorial, and through the darkness of infancy I can make out her blue gaze bent over me on the day when the good fairies custom-

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A SEATED DEMON

(After a Painting by Mehmet Siyah Qalem)

He sits, his black flesh deeply creased and rolled
across forehead and chest, and holds, in one hand,

a golden figure. His neck and arms, gold-
banded like his radiant ankles, tensile and

profane, strain with dignity toward the form
he possesses. She is a headless, full-breasted,

heavy-thighed representation of warm
life continuing, the sexual feast.

Naturally, she will soon pull away,
leaving him demonstrably blacker. He'll rise,

adjust his scarlet trousers, turn to survey
the dissolving form of his desire, train his eyes

on the slow vanishing of the painter's brush.
His dark regard amplifies the drying wash.

—Sidney Wade

• •

"Perhaps you'd feel more comfortable talking on a non-skid surface."

• •

arily gather with gifts and greetings for the newborn. I don't know what gift she intended for me: amid the bounty of gifts called life, Zhenechka's own gift, humble and small, could easily have been lost, or maybe she had nothing to offer but herself, nothing but the steady glow of love and tranquillity that emanated from her smooth, clear soul.

Once she gave one of us girls a pretty box: luxurious, satin, full of light-blue envelopes for love letters. Embarrassed, she threw back the top so that its taut blue silk reins quivered; on the inner side, hidden from idle eyes, she had written in her clear, schoolteacher's hand, "If you asked for advice I would say only one thing: don't wish to be the prettiest, wish to be the most beloved." And we did wish this. But nothing came of it, of course, no more than it did for Zhenechka herself.

Her mouth was not made for kissing. No. It was simply a dry, prim, pedagogical mouth, which with age acquired that particular array of surrounding wrinkles that unmistakably indicate honesty, goodness, and simplicity—and all those tiresome, well-meant, inarguable truths that its owner hastens to share with you: the north is cold, the south is hot; May mornings are better than November fogs; sun, lilies of the valley, and golden curls are good; tornadoes, toads, and bald patches are bad. And roses—roses are the best thing on earth.

Zhenechka always stuck to her routine, of course. She exercised every morning. In all seasons she kept the window cracked open at night, and made a point of waking early—not because she liked gray, dank dawns but because she could be useful in the mornings. The luxury of idleness was unknown to her, coquetry beyond her ken, playfulness alien, intrigue incomprehensible. That's the reason Hymen ran from her, not because he was the least bit scared off by her hearing aid or her orthopedic shoe. No, those trifles appeared later—after the war, after the bomb that exploded close to her—when Zhenechka was already over fifty. That wasn't the reason, of course. After all, even legless people can get married and have a family; it's the soul that counts. And her soul was—well, they don't come any simpler.

If our souls are usually constructed like a kind of dark labyrinth—so that any feeling running in at one end comes out the other all rumpled and dishevelled, squinting in the bright light and most likely wanting to run back inside—then Zhenechka's soul was built rather like a smooth pipe, with none of those back streets, dead ends, secret places, or, God forbid, trick mirrors.

And the face matched the soul: simple blue eyes, a simple Russian nose. It would even have been quite a nice-looking face if it hadn't taken forever to get from the nose to the upper lip. Short, fluffy hair, a style called "smoke." Braids when she was young, of course.

She wore simple muslin dresses, undergarments that were clean and cheerless; in winter she put on a shabby, quilted cotton coat that she called her "fur," and covered her head with a tall boyar hat; summer or winter, she never removed her amber beads, worn not for beauty's sake but for her health, because she believed some sort of electricity emanated from them.

She taught Russian her whole life, and—if you think about it—how could it have been otherwise?

GIVING presents was her favorite activity. Winters in our Leningrad apartment, at the core of my childhood, there would be a ring at the door, and—smiling, squinting, treading heavily on her orthopedic shoe, leaning on her staff—little boyar Zhenechka would enter in her cloth "fur," the real fur hat over her puffed hair, a fresh ruddiness on her middle-aged cheeks, and in her hands a pastry box and other tiny, mysterious bundles.

We would all run out into the foyer; smiling silently, Zhenechka would hand over her things—the staff to the right, the tall hat to the left—and unbutton her heavy coat. Freed from its padding, the hearing aid on her chest filled with our cries and greetings, the smack of our kisses, shouts about how young she'd got and how well she looked. Having combed the fluffy smoke at the mirror and straightened the heavy amber beads, Zhenechka got down to passing out her gifts: for the grownups, useful, serious books that got leafed through, set aside, and never picked up again; for us, tiny flasks of perfume, little notebooks, or surprising trifles miraculously preserved from prerevolutionary times—statuettes, embroidered brooches, ancient cups with broken handles—treasures to take any little girl's breath away. Amazing how all these easily lost, perishable little things filtered down through the years. Time's meat grinder readily destroys big, solid, cumbersome objects—cabinets, pianos, people—while all manner of fragile odds and ends that appeared on God's earth to gibes and raised eyebrows—all those little porcelain dogs, miniature cups, tiny vases, rings, drawings, snapshots, boxes, notes, knickknacks, thingamajigs and whatchamacallits—pass through unscathed. Zhenechka's tiny apartment somewhere on the edge of the city near the sea was crammed with all this marvellous junk, while her sisters—the three here and the fourth, who'd gone to live in Helsingfors, beyond that sea, beyond its sad, gray waters—had vanished like smoke. We were all she had left in the world.

Having handed everything out and received the happy squeals and kisses due her, Zhenechka picked up her pastries and marched off to the parlor to drink coffee.

The pastries, of course, were from Nord—the best. On her bad legs, Zhenechka had stood in a long line for them in that magical basement, that gathering place for all believers in sugary terrestrial bliss, where impatient ladies intent on instant happiness elbow their way over to the side gripping a pastry in tremulous fingers and—pressed by the crowd to the mirrored column, to their own agitated reflections—snort like eager fairy-tale stallions, their nostrils exhaling a double, swirling puff of sweet powder that slowly settles on their silver-fox collars.

Zhenechka would open the box wherein reposed the grand, monarchical pastries, Napoleon and Alexander; beside them, like Dmitry the Pretender, the despised shortbread ring, that constant of railroad snack bars, had wormed its way in. No one wanted it, but to Zhenechka it, too, seemed wonderful—the ruddy embodiment of a sated, crumbly dream dreamt during the not yet forgotten, hungry nights of the wartime blockade.

Until the pastries are gone, being with Zhenechka holds my interest, and then, alas, it becomes a bore. She discusses in detail her health, the contents of a book she read, the flowers that grow so luxuriantly in the summer at a friend's house near the Peri station (from the station you walk straight ahead, turn left, then one more turn, and it's the second house) but don't grow in winter because of the fact that in the winter the ground is covered with snow, which falls from the sky, and thus unfortunately nothing can grow, but as soon as spring comes and the days get longer and the nights shorter and the sun starts warming things and leaves appear on the trees, then, of course, the flowers will bloom again.

I slip quietly out of the room and off to the kitchen; that's where real life is! Marfa, the housekeeper, is drinking tea with the lady who operates the elevator. Marfa is a tall, bald, cunning old peasant woman who was washed up at our door by the war; she knows absolutely everything better than everybody.

"So he says, 'Keep an eye on my suitcase, lady, will you? I'll be back in the wink of an eye,' he says. So she takes it from him. Right away he's up and gone. Well, he's gone for an hour, and he's gone for two, and now she has to go home. She's bone-tired of waiting. She figures she'll hand it over to the police, but she thinks, Well, I'll just take a look-see. So she peeks inside." Marfa raises her eyebrows up high, pokes the sugar lumps with the tongs.

"Well?" says the elevator lady, alarmed.

" 'Well' to you too. A fine how-de-do! She thought maybe there's valuables in there, or something. Opens it up—heavenly Mother of God! . . . A head, with mustaches!"

"Chopped off?"

"Right to here. Just a head, deary, with mustaches. Some guy, not too old. And the head tells her, 'Shut the suitcase,' he says, 'and don't stick your nose in where it don't belong!' "

"Oh my! The head says that?"

"Yes. Well, she's off and running for all she's worth. And the head yells after her, 'Shut the suitcase, you stupid fool, or you'll be in big trouble!' And he starts cussing her something fierce."

"No!"

"These was a pack of thieves, deary. That's what they was. They'd take him along in that suitcase, give him to someone in line to hold on to, and from inside there he hears everything—who's got bonds hidden where, or lengths of cloth."

"So that's what they do!"

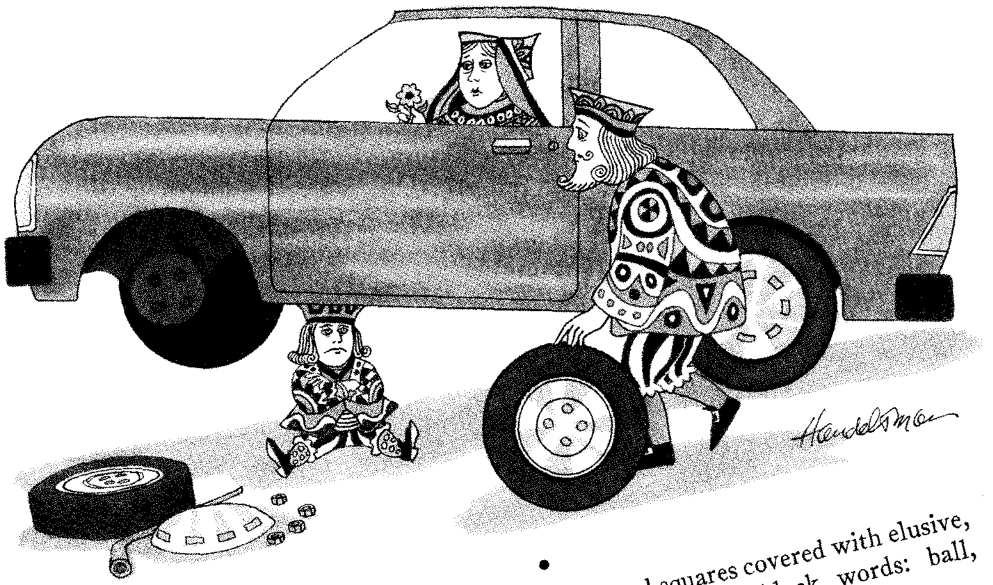
Horrified, I ask, "The head—who was it?"

"Who, who—what's it to you? You go play. . . . That what's-her-name of yours—she still here? The one with the beads?"

Marfa doesn't like Zhenechka: she doesn't like her shabby coat, her beads, her nose. . . . "What a nose—a regular hose! If I had me a horn like that, I'd toot it on holidays! Such a laaa-dy! The same old gab all the time—yackety yackety yak . . . "

Marfa laughs, the elevator lady also laughs, politely, into her hand, and I laugh along with them, betraying poor unsus-

"Surprise!"



pecting Zhenechka, may she forgive me! But it's true, she does go on—yackety, yackety. . . ."

"And I heard another—" Marfa starts.

But already there's a deep blue outside the windows, and there are voices in the foyer—Zhenechka is getting ready to go home. Exhausted, everyone rushes to kiss her, a bit ashamed that they were so blatantly bored and Zhenechka, the pure soul, didn't notice anything amiss.

And someone walks her to the tram while the rest watch out the window: under slowly falling snow, leaning on her staff, in her tall hat, Zhenechka slowly shuffles away, back to her lonely dwelling.

And the tram will rush past wastelands, snowdrifts, fences, past low brick factories that send a roaring appeal into the steely winter murk, past buildings decimated by the war. And somewhere at the edge of town, where the cold fields begin, a wizened amputee tumbles into the dim, clanking car, stretches out his accordion, and sings, "Oh, woe is me, a poor old cripple, I'm only half a man, they think; if you don't help, my cares will triple, for I still need to eat and drink," and warm, shame-ridden coppers fly into his filthy hat.

• •

BUT she was actually young once! Just think—the sky was not a whit paler than it is now, and the very same velvety black butterflies fluttered above the splendid rose beds, and the whistle of the grass under Zhenechka's cloth shoes was just as silky when she walked down the drive, canvas suitcase in hand, to her first pupil, the dark-eyed mute boy.

His parents were good-looking and rich, of course; they had an estate, and the estate had a greenhouse with peach trees, and young Evgeniya Ivanovna, who had just finished school with honors, was photographed among the peach blossoms—homely, smiling pleasantly, with two long, fluffy braids remarkable for the fact that they grew thicker and fluffier at the bottom. The picture faded to an iodine yellow, but Zhenechka's smile and the peach blossoms still showed, while her mute charge had bleached away entirely—all we could see was a bright patch nestled up against Zhenechka.

When she came to that long-ago family, the boy could speak only his name: Buba. The rest of the world was engulfed in his silence, although he heard everything and loved everyone, and must have come to love Zhenechka especially, for he often sat close by her, gazed at her with his dark eyes, and stroked her face with his little palms.

It was enough to move a person to tears, and the rich parents wept, blowing their noses into lacy handkerchiefs, while the bearded family doctor, whom they paid exorbitant sums to examine Buba, gave his indulgent approval to the new governess, though he didn't find her pretty. But Zhenechka wasn't touched, and she didn't weep. All business, she immediately established a daily routine and never deviated from it in all the years that she lived with her charge. After a while, to the amazement of the parents and the envy of the bearded doctor, the boy began to talk—quietly and slowly, glancing at serious, attentive Zhenechka, forgetting by morning the words he had learned the night before, mixing up his letters and losing his way in the maelstrom of sentences, but, still and all, he did begin to talk and could even draw some scribbles. The letter *izhitsa* came out best—the least used, most unnecessary letter in the Russian alphabet.

On Zhenechka's instructions the rich parents bought dozens of lotto games, and mornings she would wake to a knock at the door; the boy was already waiting for her, holding under his arm a rattling box full of little cardboard squares covered with elusive, difficult, slippery black words: ball, bird, hoopstick.

Once she took a vacation and paid a visit to her Petersburg sisters—she was not destined to see the fourth, the most beloved one, in far-off Helsingfors. Called back to the peach estate by an urgent telegram, she found the rich parents sobbing, the bearded doctor tranquilly triumphant, and the boy silent. The flimsy film of words had washed from his memory during Zhenechka's absence; the enormous, rumbling world, fearsome and noisy, had reared up in menace and crashed down on him in all its nameless inarticulateness, and only when Zhenechka hurriedly unpacked her canvas bag and pulled out the bright ball she'd bought him did the boy cry out in recognition, gasping, "Moon, moon!"

They wouldn't let Zhenechka go off again; now her Petersburg sisters had to come to her. But her favorite sister somehow couldn't manage to get away from Helsingfors for a visit. And she never did.

There was some fear that Zhenechka would marry and abandon the peach family—a needless fear: her youth fluttered by and departed without attracting anyone's attention. There must have been men Zhenechka liked, who appeared and disappeared in her life, just as, if you turn a kaleidoscope for a long time, a rare, yellow shard of glass will occasionally tumble free and bloom like a broken star. But not one of them asked more of Zhenechka than true, steady friendship; there was no one whose eyes misted over at the thought of Zhenechka, and no one who made a secret of his acquaintance with her—such a pure, respectable, ennobling acquaintance. Zhenechka is an extraordinarily good person, someone would say, and others would ardently take up the cry: Oh, yes, wonderful! Simply unique! So honest. And decent. Uncommonly conscientious. A crystal-pure soul!

BUT there was one short, stunted, meagre love in Zhenechka's life; there was someone who troubled her clear soul—perhaps for a week, perhaps for her whole life; we never asked. But whenever she told the story of how she lived and whom she taught before the war, one episode trembled plaintively through the years; there was one episode that she always faltered over, and her high, calm voice would suddenly break for a moment, always on the very same phrase: "Good tea, Evgeniya Ivanovna. It's hot." That's what someone said to her at three o'clock on one prewar February afternoon, in a warm, wooden building. At the time, Zhenechka was teaching Russian in a quiet sewing school vegetating amid the apple trees and kitchen gardens somewhere on the outskirts of the city. Tearing themselves away from the subtleties of constructing "Undergarments, Women's Winter" and bolero jackets, uncounted generations of young seamstresses plunged into the refreshing, well-ordered streams of Russian grammar, only to forget forever the blur of Zhenechka's face, after leaving their alma mater. They scattered around the world, loving, giving birth, stitching, pressing; they sang, saw husbands off to war, cried, grew old, and died. But, resolutely taught by Zhenechka, even on their conjugal beds they remembered the correct spelling of negative prefixes, and on their deathbeds, in mortal swoon, they could, if necessary, have parsed a sentence.

Zhenechka travelled to the seamstresses through the black dawn by ice-cold tram; she ran, cold and ruddy, into the overheated wooden office and, immediately, looked about for the one she cherished: a rather gloomy, stoop-shouldered history teacher. He would walk toward her without noticing her, and pass her by, and she dared not gaze after him. Her face burned, her hands trembled a little as she opened the workbooks, but he—he walked about in the same building as she and thought his own thoughts. Such was the love that was her lot.

No one knew, and no one will ever know, what words she silently sent him while he stood by the window of the teachers' lounge and looked out at the snowy yard where sparrows swayed like dark berries on branches. She probably yearned to say something honest, serious, and unremarkable, to make a modest request: notice me, love me—but who says that sort of thing out loud? No one knew where he had been before, this man, nor where he went, but he must have come from somewhere. Dark-faced, taciturn—he'd been gassed in the first war, people said. He coughed dully through the wooden corridors, clutching his sunken chest in its soldier's shirt, and he smoked, smoked in the cold vestibule, where clumps of cotton batting stuck out of the insulated doors, where a feeble pink sun shattered against frosty purple stems on the icy sill. He warmed his hands at the tile stove, smoked another cigarette, and left to lecture the seamstresses on history; the sound of his cough and his quiet, rather strained voice came from behind the tightly closed doors. Such was the man who pierced Zhenechka's heart, but neither of them said anything important to the other. And after all, who was Zhenechka to him? Just a good co-worker. There was nothing between them except the mugs of tea she poured for him in the teachers' lounge after lessons—trembling, her knees weak from her own foolhardiness. Madness, madness . . . It was no ordinary cup; it was a loving cup, adroitly disguised as a comradely one: Zhenechka poured tea for all the teachers, but she didn't give everyone so much sugar. A dark-blue, chipped mug with a black border—that was all. And he drank it gratefully, and nodded. "Good tea, Evgeniya Ivanovna. It's hot." And Zhenechka's love—a homely, barefoot orphan—danced for joy.

That was it, and there was nothing more at all, and soon he disappeared, and there was no one to ask.

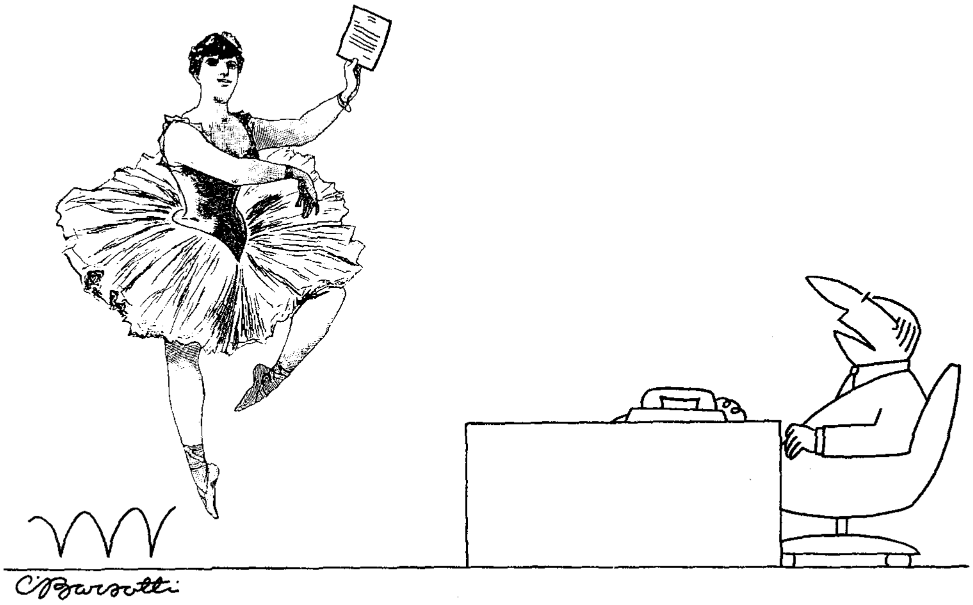
FAR outside the city, beyond the wasteland of the outskirts, off the big roads, amid the pine forests and glades of fireweed, surrounded by overgrown lilac, the abandoned dacha quietly ages. The lock is rusting, the porch rots; thistle has strangled the flower beds, and prickly raspberry edges away from the fence, timidly at first, and then ever more boldly, twining

"*Careful—you're interviewing again.*"

into the nettle to form a burning hedge.

At night the wind rises over the blustery, deserted lake; it tears an iron sheet from the roof, rumbles it, and flings it into the garden. The wind-bent grass whistles, wild berries and seeds scatter on the humid night earth, sowing a gloomy harvest of dragon's teeth. And we thought Zhenechka was immortal.

We didn't listen to the end of her stories, and now no one will ever know what happened to the mute boy. We threw out unread the books she gave us; we promised to come visit her in her Leningrad apartment but we never meant it; and the older we grew the more excuses we found to avoid her cold, lonely home. And when we finally did come, how she rushed to and fro with joy, how she clutched us—already grown a head taller than she—with small dry hands, how she flung herself from the table to the stove, where an apple pie was already well under way, how hurriedly she straightened a festive cloth on the round table, anchoring it firmly with a vase of autumn roses! And how hastily she smoothed out the high bed's worn silk coverlet, pale like the fluid, frayed petal of an enormous rose, so light it couldn't be thrown over the bed with one broad flap: rumpling in a slow glide, slack and indifferent, riding handfuls of stale indoor air as it fell, it shuddered there for a while, stirred by the thin streams of a warm draft, by the rumble of trucks outside. And, having eaten her pie, we would depart feeling awkward and relieved, and we would relish the autumn air and laugh at everything, looking around us eagerly for the arrival of love, which we expected any minute now—long, true love, everlasting and unique—while the love that leaned against the windowpane above and watched us go was too simple and mundane for us. But Zhenechka, thank God, didn't realize that. And she ardently awaited the new summer, awaited her rendezvous with the old dacha, with the new flowers, and with us, her beloved ones.



"Well, if you hadn't misfiled it in the first place it wouldn't have been lost."

THE school years were coming to an end, the examinations loomed ahead, and energetic Zhenechka prepared for a decisive summer of work. But all this voluntary service—drumming Russian grammar into the heads of ungrateful, sarcastic lazybones day after day; clearing the jungles of dense, stubborn, wily ignorance; planting the cleared terrain with shapely grammatical trees, their spreading branches sibilant with the fuzzy suffixes of Russian participles; trimming away dry knots, grafting fresh branches into place and gathering the fallen fruit—all this toil was apparently not enough for her. The restlessness of the eternal cultivator drove her into the garden, which was as untended and wild as the heads of her pupils. We would urge her to stretch out in the chaise longue in the sun: what could be better for an old person—just cover your head with burdock leaves and doze till dinnertime. But instead it was we who collapsed into the chaise longue, languid from sun and adolescence, while Zhenechka tied a kerchief on her head and marched into the overgrowth with shears and rake. In her hands flowers seemed to soar: ornate pink hydrangeas like bombs about to burst into red, or blue ones like a mousse of whisked sky tinged with smoky thunderheads; peonies of dark, swooning velvet; and some frizzy, nameless trifle that was splashed all about like a quivering white rain. Only her beloved roses did poorly, no matter how hard she tried. We knew that Zhenechka dreamed of a genuine red rose, pure and deep like the sound of a cello; but either the meagre northern warmth held them back or the earth in our garden rejected the timid roots—the roses grew small, waifish, consumptive.

Zhenechka would come onto the veranda in great distress to tell us, "Worms are eating the roses!"

"Give 'em the old one-two!" we answered, bored. "Make an example of them!" "Cut off their quarterly bonus!"

But she was afraid of them—of flower worms, and rain worms, and especially of mushroom worms; it was difficult to slip a basket of mushrooms past her watchful eye. Arrest, inspection, and destruction threatened our booty, so we had to hand the basket straight through the low kitchen window while someone stood watch. Hastily dashing icy well water over the slippery, jumping, liplike brown boletuses stuck with leaves, or the pale, broad russulas that crumbled like shortbread and squeaked in our hands, we would throw them into the noisily boiling pot, using a straining spoon to hold back the mushrooms crawling over the rim and to skim off the turbid foam full of dead, floating worms. At the clunk of Zhenechka's orthopedic shoe we would work faster, bustling and giggling, and by the time she ceremoniously entered the kitchen, pushing open the door with a royal gesture, the burbling broth already shone with a dark, transparent purity.

"No worms?" she would ask, grave and anxious.

"No, no, Zhenechka—perfectly

SECREST 273

(EVERY PUREBRED SHEEP IS IDENTIFIED BY NAME, OF THE FARM
OR FARMER, AND NUMBER.)

Death by northwest, breaking the crust
With every third step,
Being human, the burying kind,
I pull the sled with the sheep strapped on
Across the pasture.
I do this blind in the first spring sun,
Going eyeball to eyeball with winter.
Tottering on three feet of old snow,
I plow down last night's small new fall
With that bilge of mucus and old bones,
The one who takes them, taking her where old sheep go.

This has belly laughs and nosebleeds in it.
The belly laughs in a liquid way.
The fluid she finally choked on
Now passes freely out her nose.
Progressive pneumonia took this sheep
But it didn't carry her off.

At the dry spring there is a tomb of cement
And a roof of gently splintering wood,
The old springhouse.
I dump them there.

With sweat and with harsh breath
Like hers that broke
I get her up and over
And down she goes
All heavy bundled falling beauty.

Husbandry: what I am married to is life,
Prolapsed and down on its pasterns,
Blowflies and screwworms.
But there are very few can love what doesn't die:
Rocks and the race and the dead heart
Of the hurtling planet—you think they don't hurt
In their dry gaze without the grease of loss
And the coagulating of the blood?

It's too late to honor what died in my barn
But I can name the dead:
I piss out 2 stop 7 stop 3 stop,
Step aside and finish with whatever comes.
It makes: not quite a question mark, not a knife,
Not a snow angel, not a crooked stick
With snakes embraced
But a diving-down diving for earth,
A yellow eating its way to its own piece of ground.

Come spring, she will be lush,
The Argentina of bacteria,
The green and southern downs,
Then bones on the mouse runs
A stop for that knitting and nibbling kind.

Come my time, I won't be knit with earth and fungus,
But my debt will be paid back, cell by coin-shaped cell.
To the living I loved I would be knit
—for a while, for as long as weather takes and frost will let—
By a name in slate
And in the few grazing flocks of memory that are old, that knew.

—STEPHEN PHILBRICK

• •

wonderful mushrooms, each and every one!"

And she would calm down, never dreaming that we could possibly fib, while behind her back, wild with adolescent laughter, someone would wipe the straining-spoon clean of the dried gray foam teeming with white corpses.

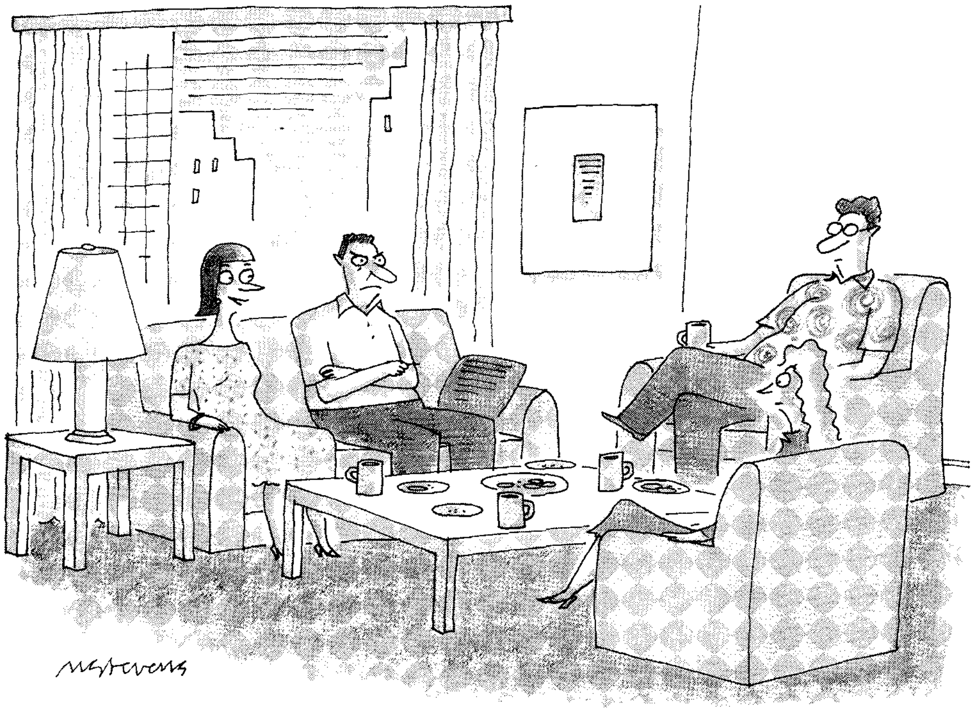
And everyone else would look away in embarrassment, as if we'd deceived a child.

AUGUST approaches, evening descends; the dark forest stands with its back to us, facing the sunset, and watches the liquid crimson islands burn out in orange seas high overhead. The first star is out. The night damp gathers. Women sitting on porches pull the hems of their skirts over their knees, speak more softly, raise their dark faces to the heavenly stillness. A black tomcat steps noiselessly out of the black grass, places a black mouse on the stoop. Soon it will be time to get up, sigh, shake off spectres, walk across the old boards; cups will clink, gas burners will flare like blue asters, the evening tea will trill. Refrigerators will clank open and the women, back from the stars, will stare mindlessly into their rumbling, dimly lit interiors, slowly recognizing the contours of terrestrial cutlets or dense, frozen cottage cheese.

Quietly aging, Zhenechka goes through the house, opens the kitchen drawers, whisks some sort of rag about, and steps out onto the silenced porch, holding her breath so as not to scare off the stillness. She puts her hands on my shoulders—dry old hands, chilled to the marrow—and I suddenly feel how small and light she is, how easily the night wind could carry her away to the dark, clamoring distances.

A long, quiet moment sets in, one of those moments when superstition says an angel is passing over, and Zhenechka begins, "Now, I remember—" but we've all come to, started talking and stood up; the porch clatters under our feet, and Zhenechka rushes to tell us the rest, but it's too late, the angel has come and gone in a gust of wind that covers her words. I see her lips moving, her naïve, loving gaze reach out; the wind grabs Zhenechka, the years spill from the sky like stars and fall onto the greedy earth where they grow like thistle, goosefoot, and couch grass; the old house chokes and dies, and oblivion blossoms everywhere.

AN old person is like an apple tree in November: everything in him is falling asleep. In anticipation of night the sap stops flowing, the insensitive



"We have to go now. Robert's façade is beginning to crumble."

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roots grow chill and turn to ice, while slowly, slowly, the split branch of the dusty Milky Way spins overhead. Head back, its dry stumps stretched to the frost-furred stars, the obedient, perishable creature waits, waits for the speechless swell of time to roll over it, carrying everything along.

Time passed, and we became adults. Busy with our urgent affairs and our friends, our books, and our children, we brushed Zhenechka's life aside; it was harder and harder for her to leave her house, and she would phone to relate things that interested no one.

For a minute or two, I listen to her slow voice, then lay the receiver softly on the telephone table and run off: in the kitchen pots are boiling, hot oil is shooting from the skillet; in the dining room there's lively conversation, laughter, and news, and they're calling me to share it all. The doorbell rings, a frozen, rosy crowd enters in raucous fur coats, there's the clatter of skis, the thud of feet; the floors shake, the windowpanes shake, and beyond the windowpanes the frosty trees shake, bathed in the wintery evening gold.

Zhenechka's voice lies cozily on the tablecloth, unhurriedly telling the telephone book, ashtray, and apple core its joys and worries. Complaining and marvelling, admiring and wondering, her soul flows in a steady stream from the telephone receiver's tiny holes, spills over the cloth, evaporates like smoke, dances like dust in the last rays of the sun.

"Why is the receiver off the hook?" someone asks.

I grab the phone with barely wiped wet fingers, and shout, "Yes, Zhenechka! Of course, Zhenechka!" and rush away again. Her hearing aid sings and chirps; she doesn't notice a thing.

"Well, what's she saying?" asks a passing member of the household.

"Let me listen. . . . Something about some Sofiya Sergeyevna who went to the sanatorium last summer and the roses they had there . . . She says the roses were red and their leaves were green. . . . in the sky there was the sun, but at night the moon . . . and the sea was full of water. . . . people swam, and got out of the water . . . and dressed in dry clothes and the wet clothes dried out. . . . Oh, and she asks how we are. Fine, Zhenechka! I said we're fine, just fi-ine! Yes! I'll tell them! I'll tell them!"

We were all she had left in the world.

BUT there came a day in the middle of winter when—shaken to the depths of her soul, armed with a cracked walking staff, the remains of her boyar hat pulled low—Zhenechka appeared on our threshold with a long blue envelope in her hands.

Words buzzed and fluttered in the envelope, telling her that she was not alone in this world; that quite close by—just a stone's throw away, beyond the cold gulf, beyond the arc of green ice and the swishing pines, in the snow-covered city of Helsinki (formerly Helsingfors), in an A-frame house, around a cheerful fireplace—there lived and smiled the offspring of Zhenechka's favorite, long-lost sister; that these offspring were waiting, couldn't wait a minute longer for dear Aunt Eugénie to enter under the peaked roof, into their hospitable half-Finnish embrace, and to lay cellophane-wrapped flowers on the grave of her dear sister, who rests in peace in a tidy Finnish cemetery.

We saw Zhenechka off at the station. She was flustered and embarrassed, like Cinderella stepping into the pumpkin carriage drawn by mice; she clutched the canvas suitcase with her toothbrush and a change of underclothes inside it. We had seen these undergarments at the dacha, on the lakeshore at dawn, when Zhenechka did the hygienic exercises suitable for her age. The shifts consisted of rectangular sackcloth panels, meticulously joined with a solid, eternal seam; these severe, soldierly items knew neither darts nor flounces, nor any other tailor's mischief—just plain, sturdy panels, like the white pages of a story about an honest, hardworking life, usefully lived.

A month later we went to meet her at the same station, ran the entire length of the train, and couldn't find her. From one car emerged an impressive old lady with eyebrows black like a fallen angel's and thickly rouged cheeks, dressed in fluffy furs and a dignified hat. The porter carried her scented suitcases. Someone recognized Zhenechka by her orthopedic shoe.

"Well?" we asked.

"They've got everything over there," she said. And, overcome, she nearly fainted.

We took her home and made her tea.

After that, Zhenechka went to Finland every spring. And then each summer—shining and crazed, happy and youthful—she grew unheard-of flowers from Finnish seeds in the fragrant, revitalized garden of our dacha. Zhenechka's lacy underwear, celestial and lemon-colored, hung on a line above the flowers, and in her room incredible objects were heaped on her shelf: perfumes, lipsticks, nail polish. And the roses—red roses which had behaved capriciously for so many years—suddenly flourished under Zhenechka's hands, shooting out new buds in swift succession. The Finnish fertilizer may have helped.

Zhenechka would catch us on the front porch or in the garden and excitedly thrust photographs at us for the umpteenth time: Zhenechka on a Finnish sofa in the living room, Zhenechka with her great-nephew—her new, adored pupil—clinging poignantly to her hand (what's his name again, Zhenechka? Koko or Pupu?), Zhenechka in the dining room at dinner—lettuce leaves and a couple of green weeds. "They're very thrifty. And they follow a strict diet."

We looked at Zhenechka's belatedly blackened eyebrows and yawned, listening as she sang her hymns to the untold riches of the fish stores.

"But Zhenechka, do they have sprats in tomato sauce?"

"No, now, I don't think I saw any sprats."

"Well, there you are. How about Wave fish paste?"

"I don't think so."

"Well, then! They're way behind us! Just look, our shelves are loaded with sprats and fish paste!"

And earnest Zhenechka did her best to argue and persuade.

"And where did you go while you were there?"

"Oh, I stayed at home. I took care of my great-nephew."

"And them?"

"They went to the Azores. They'd already bought the tickets," she said in justification.

So while the relatives lolled about on ocean beaches, the infatuated Zhenechka watered, weeded, and coddled her new sapling with the stubbornness of an insane gardener; she drew the barbarian alphabet on blue paper, so that the boy could meet his suntanned parents with a Russian poem or an unpronounceable greeting. On her return to Leningrad, she took to writing postcards, choosing the prettiest: bouquets, golden Petersburg bridges, and the statue of the Bronze Horseman (her relatives mistook Peter the Great on his horse for the anarchist Kropotkin). And new love, which never comes too late, thundered and raged and cascaded over her from head to toe.

And we believed that Zhenechka was immortal, that youth can return, that a candle once lit will never go out, and that virtue, whatever we might think of it, will eventually be rewarded.

WE'LL choose a day, lock the doors behind us, descend the cold staircase, go out into the stuffy morning city, and leave for the dacha. We'll step off the train onto the bare cement platform, walk under the aspen hum of the wires and on—through marsh and thicket, across hills and copses—to where the empty house sleeps beyond the glades of overgrown fireweed, where lilac has gone wild, where a crow taps his beak along the porch, where mice say to one another, "Let's live here for a while."

It's a damp, lushly blooming northern June. The brittle fifes of bedstraw have opened their white umbrellas; disturbed, a mysterious young bird cries loudly; and tiny veronica blossoms litter every sunny clump of dry earth with dark blue.

The old, crooked dacha sinks into the thick grass like a half-drowned boat. We wade toward it through the grass, parting the dense overgrowth with our hands like swimmers; we find the long-forgotten keys and look around, stretching arms numb from the weight of the bags. Lilac darkens the rooms, pines have crushed the veranda's fragile breast. We drink tea there: Let's spend the night! Why don't we ever come here? We could live here! But it's a long way to lug supplies. We should weed out the nettle. Plant some flowers. Repair the front porch. Prop it up somehow. . . . The words fall into the stillness, the impatient lilac has burst through the open windows and sways as it listens to our empty promises, our impossible projects, our rosy dreams fading in an instant: it's not true, no one will come, there *is* no one to come, she's gone, she's a shadow, and the night wind will blow away her dilapidated dwelling.

ONCE again Zhenechka packed her bags to go visit her Finnish relatives: for the baby an ABC book, for the nephews something stronger. She was only waiting for the letter, and it arrived. The relatives came straight to the point—they couldn't invite dear Eugénie to visit them anymore. She would understand, of course; after all, she had reached such a venerable age that what had happened to their neighbors' Aunt Nika could happen to her any minute. And enclosed was a photograph of this aunt in her coffin, all dressed up and still, surrounded by Russian Orthodox lace and Finnish bouquets. Look how badly Aunt Nika behaved; if dear Eugénie were to do the same thing during her visit there might be complications, trouble, misunderstandings . . . and who would pay for it all? Had dear Eugénie considered this? And she needn't write anymore: why strain her eyes—and she might get a cramp in her hand!

Zhenechka stood and stared at the photograph of an unknown old lady in a neat coffin, a graphic reproach to Zhenechka's lack of foresight, and the nightingale that had sung on her bosom for many years grew deaf and shut its eyes tight. And, like a black wind flying into an open window, fate turned, stuck out its tongue, and screeched, "Just try and be most beloved!," and with a deafening cackle snuffed the candle out.

A LIGHT Karelian night. There's neither darkness nor crimson dawn: an endless white dusk. All the colors have drained away; the grainy half-moon seems a cloudy brushstroke in the luminous heights; in the distance, the flat lake glimmers in lacklustre coves. A mosquito whines; eyes close. There's a rustling in the gray grass, the creak of cracked shutters. Overnight, yet another colored pane will fall from the veranda, overnight the grasses will rise still higher, the path we walked in the morning will be swallowed up and our footsteps will vanish; fresh mold will bloom on the front porch, a spider will spin the keyhole shut, and the house will fall asleep for another hundred years—from the underground passages where the Mouse King roams to the high attic vaults from which the fleshless steeds of our dreams take flight.

—TATYANA TOLSTAYA

(*Translated, from the Russian, by Jamey Gambrell.*)

ANNALS OF ENTERPRISE

HOT METAL—II

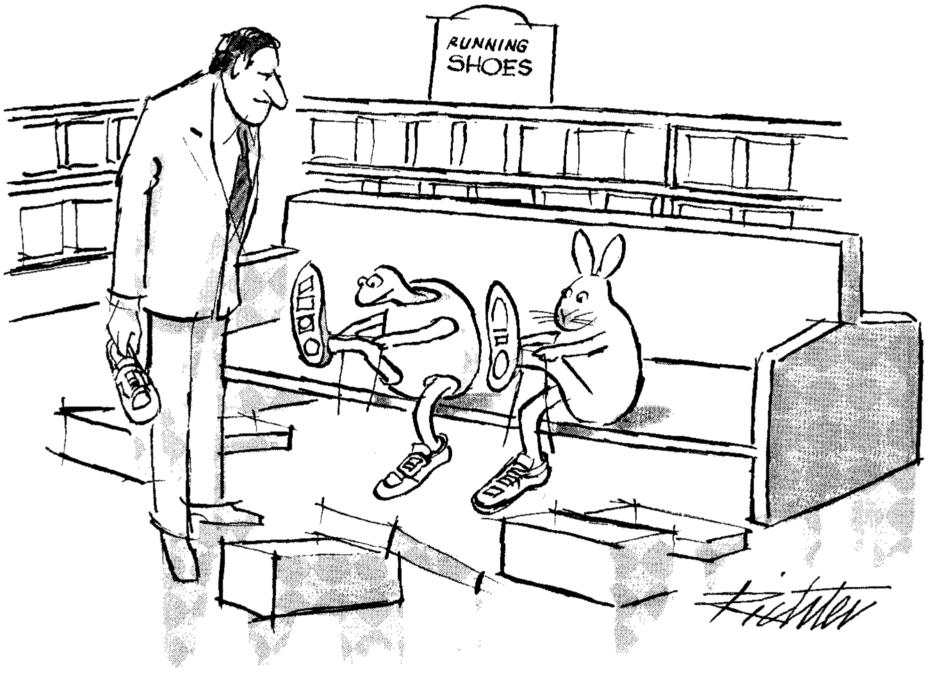
IN 1986, F. Kenneth Iverson, the chairman and chief executive officer of the Nucor Corporation, the tenth-largest steel company in the United States, decided to gamble a quarter of a billion dollars on an experimental machine for making sheet steel. In the fall of 1988, workers began to assemble the machine at a site that Nucor called the Crawfordsville Project, situated in the middle of cornfields near Crawfordsville, Indiana. The steelworkers were young people, some of whom Nucor had hired away from competitors, some of whom had no experience in the steel industry. The machine was known as the compact-strip-production machine, or the C.S.P. It was a German invention, designed and built by SMS Schloemann-Siemag AG, a West German engineering concern. The C.S.P. was 1,177 feet long and consisted of around a million parts. It was said to be a "miniature" steelmaking device. If the gamble paid off, the C.S.P. would consume electrically melted scrap steel —shredded Cadillacs and Toyotas, pieces of office buildings, and the like— and turn it into a ribbon of gleaming steel. The machine would consume twenty-five thousand railcar loads of junk a year, transforming it into a million tons of sheet steel.

Most large steel mills consume smelted iron ore mixed with some scrap steel, but the Nucor mill would consume only recycled junk. Iverson had predicted that Nucor's compact-strip-production machine would be five times as labor-efficient as the Japanese steel industry. In his words, "We are going to leapfrog Japan." But no one knew if the thing would work. The large steel companies in the United States—the Big Steel companies, such as the Bethlehem Steel Corporation and the USX Corporation—had quietly predicted and probably hoped that Iverson's machine would fail.

Indiana is at the heart of the Rust Belt, the center of American manufacturing industries, and an area that in recent years had passed through hard times. At Nucor's job site in Crawfordsville, the machine, which had been brought by freighter across the Atlantic and down the St. Lawrence Seaway, was housed in two buildings, joined to each other in an L—the melt shop and the hot mill. The melt shop, a building as large as a cathedral, contained the electric furnaces for melting steel, and it contained the upper end of the C.S.P., the so-called casting tower. The casting tower housed an experimental thin-slab-casting machine conceived by Manfred Kolakowski, a German engineer, who shares the patent with a colleague, Hans Streubel. The thin-slab caster would produce a continuous noodle of steel, two inches thick and four feet wide. The hot-mill building contained the downstream end of the C.S.P.—a train of rolling machines. The slab that emerged from the casting machine would be red-hot, and would be rolled directly into coils of semi-finished hot-rolled sheet steel. There was a third building at the Crawfordsville Project, the cold mill. It was filled with a suite of used Austrian cold-rolling machines, which would accept some of the hot-rolled steel—the product of Iverson's machine—and cold-roll it, elongating and thinning it, and putting a shine on the metal.

Iverson had named Keith Earl Busse the general manager of the Crawfordsville Project. Busse, a native of Fort Wayne, Indiana, was an accountant with a background in bolt manufacturing; he had no previous experience in the making of raw steel. Busse had appointed a twenty-eight-year-old Englishman, Mark Millett, to be the manager of the melt shop. Millett had at one time been a cook in a ski lodge. Now, having come to work at Nucor as a metallurgist, he had received the assignment to make the experimental thin-slab-casting machine work. The casting machine was the unknown module in the C.S.P. It was the big question mark. Inventors and engineers had been trying to cast a thin slab of steel directly from molten steel since 1857, when Sir Henry Bessemer tried it and failed. There had been dozens of subsequent attempts—dozens of inventions—and so far none had gone into commercial production. Liquid steel had to be poured into a machine made of steel, and that created problems. When hot metal was poured into many of the experimental casting machines, they had burst into flames, melted down, seized up. Nucor's prospects for success seemed a little cloudy to some observers.

In early June of 1989, I watched Mark Millett as he stood on the casting deck—the top surface of the casting tower—and stared dubiously down into



"Hi, I'm Ron. I'll be your waiter this evening. Previously, I was Billy Bigelow in the Center Moriches production of 'Carousel,' Biff in the Yardley Playhouse's 'Death of a Salesman,' Nathan Detroit in Oakland's 'Guys and Dolls,' Laertes in . . ."

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the mouth of the SMS thin-slab-casting machine, into a copper funnel that I will call the Kolakowski mold. He could see water gushing over the machinery, and shadows of men moving across the machinery. "Hmm," he remarked.

"Yo! We're gittin' more water!" a voice shouted from beneath the casting deck. A wrench clanked on a pipe.

"I don't know where this goddam water is coming from!" another voice shouted, while steelworkers clattered and banged around inside the casting tower.

Millett descended two flights of stairs to the base of the casting tower, put his hands in his hip pockets, and stared up at a waterfall pouring down through the tower. The water smelled rank and moist, like a cave.

I asked, "If you have water flooding over red-hot steel inside the casting machine, will that cause an explosion?"

"No," he replied. "That won't do it. There's a saying in the steel industry that you can put water on steel but you can't put steel on water. As long as the water is on top of the steel, it boils off. When there's water *underneath* steel, it turns to steam and blows things into the sky. If you poured steel onto wet ground, it would go through the roof of the mill."

He explained that Nucor thought the melt shop's dirt floor was preferable to a concrete floor, because dirt can be kept reasonably dry, by heating it with gas-fired blowers, if necessary, but concrete tends to wick up moisture and hold it. Any moisture trapped in concrete can flash to steam under a steel splash, and the concrete explodes beneath the steel, throwing concrete shrapnel mixed with liquid steel all over the place.

At Nucor, the steelworkers have certain polite terms for being hit by a splash. One is said to be "initiated," or "christened." They say to each other, "Have you been initiated?" The recipient of a christening may run in circles, screaming, on fire. The steel soaks into the clothes and burns them off in a flash, and then it eats into the skin. The victim may sometimes try to pull the steel from his skin, burning his fingertips off.

THE financial analysts on Wall Street were telling their clients that the success of the Crawfordsville Project depended on Nucor's ability to control the quality of the scrap steel that went into the furnaces. If high-quality junk went into the mill, high-quality steel would come out of it.

The foreman in charge of Nucor's scrap heaps was Jim Hoskins, an Alabamian in his late twenties, who until he came to Crawfordsville had been a welder in an Alabama steel-joist-manufacturing plant run by a Nucor division called Vulcraft. Hoskins had light-brown hair, a mustache, and a broad, kindly face, and he was a religious person. He had no experience with scrap metal.

Hoskins' scrap piles were strung out for a mile along Nucor's railroad tracks, to the north and west of the plant. He took me for a walk through his district one day. The scrap piles were from twenty to thirty feet tall, and they stretched on and on, until the tracks turned a bend and went out of sight, heading for Nucor's junction with the old Monon Line, which runs from Louisville to Chicago. "There's only about twenty thousand tons of steel here," Hoskins said as he stood with one foot on a heap of unidentifiable crushed rust. His eyes squinted down the tracks. "Twenty thousand tons—that's nothing. That's a one-week supply, if we're running the furnaces at full steam." He walked along the piles for a hundred yards and stopped by a pile of cubes made of shiny crushed steel. They resembled sugar cubes. They weighed one or two tons apiece, depending on how tightly they were packed, and they were known as No. 1 bundles.

"No. 1 bundles are cubed-up stampings from a factory," Hoskins said. "These ones came from a General Motors truck-and-bus plant. So we call 'em truck-and-bus bundles. We've also got Chrysler bundles and we've got Ford bundles. We're going to buy a test load of Isuzu bundles. I think we'll like the Isuzu steel fine. Later, we'll get bundles of tin cans, and we'll see how they work in the furnaces."

Hoskins kicked his boot along the outskirts of a house-size pile of flat shards of steel cut into lacy shapes. "These are No. 1 bushelings out of Danville, Illinois," he said. "Bushelings are clippings and punchings from a factory. The insides of toasters, electric-motor pieces, stuff like that—good, clean sheet steel." He stopped at

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an immense heap of rusty little fragments. "This is shredded cars. See the transmission parts, motor parts, leaf springs, seat-belt buckles, tie rods, gears, door handles?" The pile glittered with door handles. They were chromed half-ovals. These were old cars. A piece of steel is nine to twenty years old by the time it reënters a furnace; the recycling loop moves like a glacier.

About seventy-five per cent of all the steel in the United States is eventually recycled. The scrap dealers in the Midwest accumulate automobiles in piles so large that they are really *iron mines*. Mountain ranges of cars have been thrust up in the Rust Belt. Scrap is one of America's great natural resources. Scrap steel made in the United States is said to be among the world's most desirable junk. Other nations buy it, resell it, barter it, pass it along. The United States exports ten million tons of scrap steel a year. We may not be able to export a memory chip, but we can always flog off our ruin to Japan, where it's melted and turned into Toyotas.

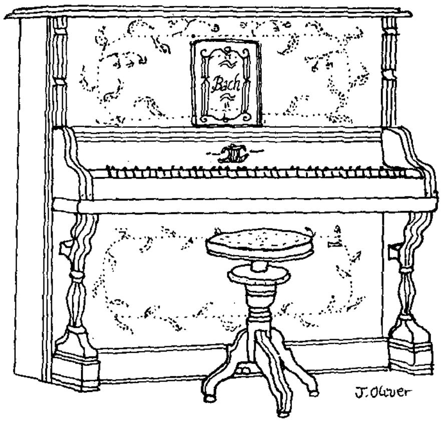
The scrap dealers have a machine that eats cars. It has twin hammer knives that can shred a car in thirty seconds. Scrap workers remove the car's motor, its lead battery, and some of its copper wiring before they send the hulk to the hammer knives. They also rifle the hulk with their hands, feeling the glove compartment, the floor mats, and the cracks between the seats, looking for loose change. They find an average of a dollar-fifty to two dollars in loose change per hulk. A big scrap dealer can shred six hundred hulks a day. That yields nine hundred to twelve hundred dollars in coinage a day, or three hundred thousand to four hundred thousand dollars in loose change a year—free cash flow.

The hulks fall out of the hammer knives as fist-size pieces of steel mixed with seat stuffing, glass, knobs, rubber chunks, bits of plastic, and wires, all mixed up and moving together along a conveyor belt. The fragments must be sorted. The conveyor belt dips through a water tank, where the plastic and other light material floats away. The conveyor belt emerges from the water and passes by human handpickers wearing gloves, who remove chunks of chrome, copper, glass, aluminum, and brake-shoe nuggets—most of which are sold as scrap, too—until the conveyor belt carries almost nothing but chunks of plain carbon steel.

Factories and office buildings enter the metallic equivalent of the hydrologic cycle. When a skyscraper is torn down, an alligator shear mounted on a hydraulic arm clips pieces of structural steel out of the building and deposits it on trucks, and the building is trucked away. Same goes for bridges. Heavy machinery can be sheared into pieces with a hydraulic shear, loaded into railroad cars, and taken to a steel mill. When the railroad cars wear out, they are cut up with torches and piled into other railroad cars and are taken to meet their maker.

Jim Hoskins was learning how to judge a pile of scrap steel the size of a house by looking at the color and texture of the material—it was like studying a horse's teeth. "If you're around the stuff long enough, you'll pick up on it," he said, somewhat hopefully. We stopped at the base of a mountain of filthy, scabrous pieces of steel. "This is No. 2 scrap," he said. "It's a lower grade. There's everything and its brother in there—wheel rims, barbed-wire punchings, whole busted motor shafts, structural I-beams from buildings. Look—there's a roll from a steel mill." The roll looked like a rolling pin, except that it was two feet wide. Nucor ate steel mills for lunch.

THE scrap had to be melted to a liquid before it was introduced into the casting machine, to be formed into a thin slab. The melting would be done in one of two electric-arc furnaces, which were embedded in the melt shop's north and south furnace decks. At the south furnace deck, Mark Millett stood at a railing and looked out through a scrap-bay door, watching lightning bolts flicker in the sky over the nearby hamlet of Whitesville. It was a spring thunderstorm. In the distance, a lone grain elevator faded away in the rain. The arc furnace was ready to go. Millett planned to tap the first heat of liquid steel tomorrow. He led me across the deck to the south electric-arc furnace.



It was a hundred-and-fifty-ton-capacity arc furnace designed by Asea Brown Boveri, a Swiss-based multinational company that makes electrical equipment. The furnace looked like a cook pot. It had a roof, which functioned like a pot lid, to trap the heat. The roof could be moved aside, so that scrap steel could be dropped into the furnace. Above the roof, three graphite electrodes, twenty-five feet long and two feet in diameter, hung vertically from three electrode arms that extended over the furnace. The electrodes, as large as the boles of mature Ponderosa pines, could be lowered through three holes in the roof of the furnace. They could deliver up to ninety million watts of power to the scrap. When both arc furnaces were running at full power, they would together suck the equivalent of a quarter of a nuke out of the Indiana power grid.

Millett jumped through a door into the furnace. His voice came out: "Watch your step."

I climbed through the door.

Millett stood in the center, his feet resting on a layer of black granules. "We're standing in coke," he said. "I put a layer of coke in here. That's to alloy the steel with carbon." The furnace vessel was twenty-two feet in diameter—the size of a living room—and circular. He explained that the furnace's walls were actually a serpentine network of water pipes, to keep the furnace cool. "Well"—he looked around the furnace—"this is the calm before the storm."

THE day of the first heat dawned rainy and cool. A dozen furnacemen stood around the south furnace deck with their hands in their pockets. The men wore "furnace greens"—sparkproof green suits, a common sight in steel mills—and they wore hard hats with dark furnace glasses attached to the brims. They stared at the cook pot embedded in the deck. It contained seventy tons of No. 1 bushelings out of Danville, topped with cubed General Motors truck-and-bus scraps. They stared at the electrodes, suspended high over the furnace at the ends of mechanical arms. They stared at their feet. The furnace crew consisted mostly of local men; the foremen, though, were experienced melters. The men kept putting their gloves on and taking them off.

Janice Roach, the plant's safety director, handed out foam earplugs. A cold, rainy wind whistled through an open bay and across the furnace deck. The steelworkers hung a blue plastic tarpaulin across the bay, to keep wind and rain off the deck.

Mark Millett stood by himself, his back and elbows resting on a railing. He wore a red checked lumberjack shirt. A lone whistle pierced the air.

"What time is it?" Millett asked.

"Five-thirty."

"Incredible how many people it takes to start the first heat," Millett said. "In a month, there won't be anybody up here except a few melters." He pulled a walkie-talkie from his back pocket and keyed up an engineer at the plant's water-pumping station. He said, "O.K., you can start the water."

High-pressure water pumps surged, driving coolant water into the arc furnace's serpentine panels with a long, wicked hiss. The hiss turned into a whine: *Wheeeeeeeeee! Boom!* Then: *Crack!* A thunder of roaring water echoed below the furnace deck.

Millett raced to the railing and stared downward. A valve in a water main had burst, and water was pouring all over the dirt floor.

"Son of a bitch!" a furnaceman said, taking off his gloves. A work crew moved a cherry-picker crane up to the water main. Steelworkers began to tinker with the valve, with wrenches.

At 7:20 A.M., the water main was repaired, and Millett ordered the water pumps to be re-started. Again there was a hiss, but this time no valves burst. As soon as Millett was satisfied that the water was circulating normally through the furnace, he gave an order to ready the electrodes for a meltdown.

The electrodes descended into the furnace. Clunk. Silence.

Swiss engineers from Brown Boveri dragged wires all over the floor of the control pulpit, mixed them up, spoke in Swiss German to each other, toggled switches, scratched their heads. At 8:45 A.M., the electrodes were again lowered into the furnace. There was a blue flash. A fierce concussion broke the air. The furnace had struck an arc. The sound of the startup hit like a slap across the face.

A velvety-brown mushroom cloud burped from the furnace and filled the west end of the melt shop with smoke. The furnace hummed and banged and gave off a loud buzz, and then it began to throw sparks over our heads, in long, soaring yellow lines. I ducked, and then looked around. The steelworkers' mouths were open. They were either screaming in fright or cheering, or both. I couldn't hear them.

The electrodes burrowed into the scrap at sixty-five million watts of power. The furnace was pulling a high tap on a long arc, as they say in the world of electric steel, meaning that it was drawing close to its maximum-rated voltage and driving the electricity in long, powerful arcs into the scrap steel. At the flip of a switch, Millett had added a city to the Indiana power grid. The noise could have cracked a molar. It made you want to get out of the building.

Abruptly, the furnace shut down. The

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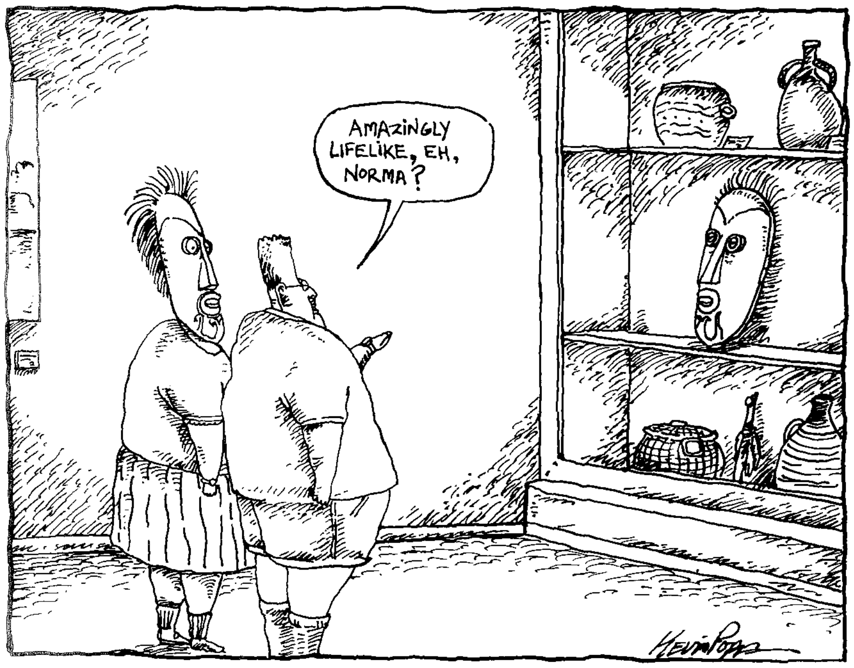
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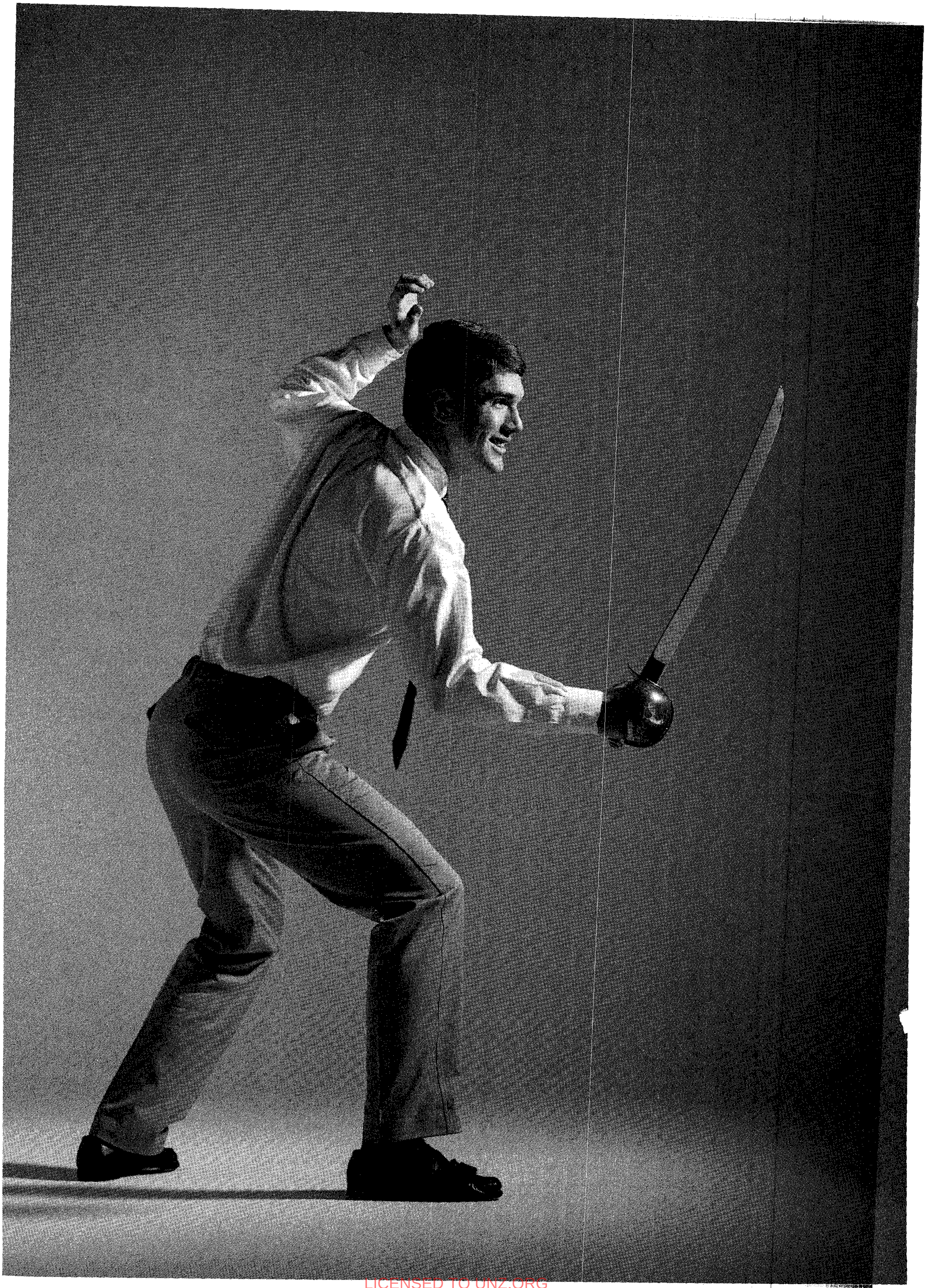

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electrodes withdrew, and when they appeared above the furnace their white-hot tips glowed too bright to be looked at with the naked eye. A group of furnacemen lowered their dark glasses and approached the electrode tips and studied them, their upturned faces bathed in light, their eyes black coins. The electrode tips dimmed to yellow and finally to cherry red.

Millett walked in circles around the arc furnace, with his hands in the back pockets of his jeans, looking for signs of overheating—a symptom of a pending steam explosion. Arc furnaces can explode. They throw out a burst of shrapnel followed by a tidal bore of molten steel.

A few minutes later, the arms lowered the electrodes into the furnace. There was another boom, and the electrodes shook. The furnace deck trembled steadily, and the banging and crashing inside the furnace smoothed out to a steady drumroll. Huge quantities of smoke and fire boiled from the furnace. Most of it was drawn off by an exhaust duct, but some smoke and fire gushed out around the furnace's lid. The furnace gave off a crumpling, crackling, unvarying string of booms that never faded away. A spectrum of low-frequency waves pulsed in the roar, making the whole building vibrate, as if the melt shop were filled with transparent wiggling gelatine.

The electrodes burrowed downward through the pile, enlarging three throats in it. Arc bursts—sparks—extended from the tips of the electrodes downward into the steel scrap. At sixty-five megawatts, a high tap on a long arc, the arcs were a foot and a half long and the diameter of a rope. They were blue plasma ropes, whipping around inside the throats drilled by the electrodes. The arcs lashed across steel; the steel caught fire, boiled, foamed, vaporized, exploded. The arcs literally hurled scrap away from the electrodes. Heat from the boiling metal penetrated the pile of scrap, and fluid steel collected in a puddle in the bottom of the furnace. The puddle rose and began to drown solid pieces of steel in a bath of hot metal.

Low-frequency sound waves fluttered my diaphragm, and the loudest pops from the furnace produced a gentle thoracic shudder. I sat on a bag of chromium sand, cringing at sparks.

An arc furnace can produce electrical disturbances in a state's power grid—echoes or harmonics that back-ripple through the grid. The furnace talks to the grid. Nucor mills were equipped with protective gear to dampen harmonics, but, typically, the gear fails to work properly during a startup, and there is a drop in voltage throughout the state, and the power chatters and wavers, as if someone were running a monstrous vacuum cleaner off the power grid. It can cause fluorescent lights to blink and television sets to flicker and computers to crash.

Janice Roach paced the furnace deck, her eyes travelling over the men. She raised her voice. "If you hear the men say 'Go,' that really means 'Go,' " she shouted. "Don't wait to find out what's wrong. Whatever it is, you don't want to know. Just go. They could knock you down on their way out."

By early afternoon, all the truck-and-bus bundles had melted. The furnace contained a bath of live fluid steel. The next thing to do was to raise the temperature of the bath to 2900 degrees Fahrenheit and to adjust the amount of dissolved carbon in the bath. To warm a bath of steel, you zap it with arcs. The electrodes were lowered into the furnace until they hovered two inches above the bath. The power setting was reduced to fifty-five million watts, and the arcs were turned on. Millett ordered the furnace's slag door to be raised while the electrodes were cooking the steel, so that he could inspect the arcs as they struck the metal.

The door moved up, and a knife-blade of sapphire light streamed out of the furnace—a fierce blue light, more dangerous to look into than the sun—and fell on the crowd, and the crowd moved backward, people lowering their dark glasses and shielding their eyes with their hands.

I lowered my furnace glasses and looked. I could see blue plasma arcs cutting into liquid steel. They chattered around the tips of the electrodes and spidered across the surface of the bath. The steelworkers didn't like the spidering. "That's called arcing off," one said. "It'll eat up the walls of the furnace."

The temperature of the plasma in the arcs alternated in pulses, from 6500 degrees Fahrenheit to 19,000 degrees. At a maximum pulse, an arc attained more than one and a half times the surface temperature of the sun. The dangerous light of the arcs contained alien tints of aquamarine and topaz. The arc light came out of the slag door in a blue beam and washed over the crowd and fell across the tarpaulin that hung in the open bay by the furnace deck. The tarpaulin billowed in the wind, opening to a view of meadows and distant trees. The morning drizzle had stopped, and the air had turned clear and lovely. A rack of storm clouds departed southward. The arc light went out into the countryside in pale-violet rods. Surely they heard the arcs in Whitesville. God knows what they thought in Whitesville if they saw the light coming out of the mill.

Next, it was time to "lance down the heat"—to inject oxygen into the bath by means of a blowpipe known as an oxygen lance. A furnace foreman named James E. McCaskill picked up an oxygen lance, a steel pipe

The Self Has Its Memories

eighteen feet long, and fitted it into the socket of a high-pressure oxygen hose. There was a hiss as the hose twitched with pressure. The hose contained oxygen at a hundred and fifty pounds per square inch. McCaskill was a thin man in his early forties, with a beak nose, a mustache, and deep-set hazel eyes—an experienced melter, who had worked for Nucor for twenty years. McCaskill approached the furnace, dragging the hose behind him. He gave a hand signal. The electrodes were raised out of the furnace, and their white tips appeared. A hush fell over the furnace deck, broken only by the hiss of water circulating inside the furnace walls. Forty people had gathered on the deck to watch the lancing operation. An air of expectancy quieted the crowd.

The slag door opened, throwing light over McCaskill. He hefted the lance in his right hand, sliding his hand along it until he found the point of balance. He turned his body sidewise and pointed the lance into the light. His right shoulder and hand, holding the lance, faced the steel; he kept the left side of his body turned away from the steel—his heart behind his body. It is a good idea to keep your body turned that way when you are lancing steel. Things can fly out of a furnace. You wouldn't want to take a bit of unmelted scrap through the heart.

McCaskill raised the lance, profiled the steel, and drove the lance into the bath. A blowback spewed out of the slag door—a firestorm of whirling, burning steel sparks and glowing slag grit. The blowback submerged McCaskill in a fire cloud. He almost disappeared.

At the moment of the thrust, he snapped his body fully sidewise and tucked his left hand behind his back, to get it out of the way of the blowback. With his right hand he raised the haft of the lance high above his head, keeping the lance tip pointed down and buried in the metal. He worked the tip around in the pool, as if he were feeling for an aorta. The steel protested with shrieks, blowbacks, rumbles, coiling movements, an unbearably bright light.

The metal fizzed: a carbon boil. The oxygen had suddenly combined with carbon in the steel, and the metal had frothed. McCaskill dodged his left hand up to his face to protect it from sparks, peering into the slag door over his glove. The whites of McCaskill's eyes flickered at the corners of his dark glasses; he was scanning the bath for signs of trouble. He never took his eyes off the heat. No furnaceman ever turns his back to hot metal that's within spitting distance. He moved closer to the door, because the lance was melting away.

In his twenty years with Nucor, McCaskill had made some thirty-five thousand heats of steel. Later, during a quiet moment, he pulled off his gloves and lit a cigarette. His face was red, and dotted with tiny white specks of slag. "Lancing?" he said. "That's nothin' strenuous."

AT three-thirty in the afternoon, Mark Millett declared a finished heat of steel. The heat was at a temperature of 2900 degrees Fahrenheit, and it was a mild steel, without much carbon in it. Millett gave orders to prepare to tap the furnace—to drain the furnace into a ladle.

A crane picked up a ladle—a tapered steel bucket, fifteen feet tall, lined with bricks, which were now glowing red-hot, having been heated by gas flames. The crane carried the ladle along the length of the melt shop, lowered it, and set it on a ladle car. The ladle car resembled a railroad car. Bells rang, and the ladle car moved the ladle underneath the arc furnace.

There was a hole in the bottom of the furnace, covered by a sliding door—the taphole, for draining steel out of the furnace. A thread of sand fell out of it. That was all. Not a dribble of steel came out of the furnace. The furnace's taphole was plugged with a skull—a lump of solid steel.

"We're going to have to lance that son of a bitch out," a foreman said.

To lance a clogged taphole is a tricky procedure. You blow oxygen into the hole with a lance. The solid plug, or skull, catches fire when it's bathed in pressurized oxygen. The metal burns like a piece of tar and dribbles out of the hole, opening the hole. The furnace's taphole usually opens suddenly, releasing a gusher of hot metal. You must stand below a furnace to lance it, but you don't want to stand too close to the hole.

Mark Millett, James McCaskill, and two other furnacemen descended a set of stairs to an observation platform below the furnace, carrying lengths of steel pipe. They fitted the pipes togeth-

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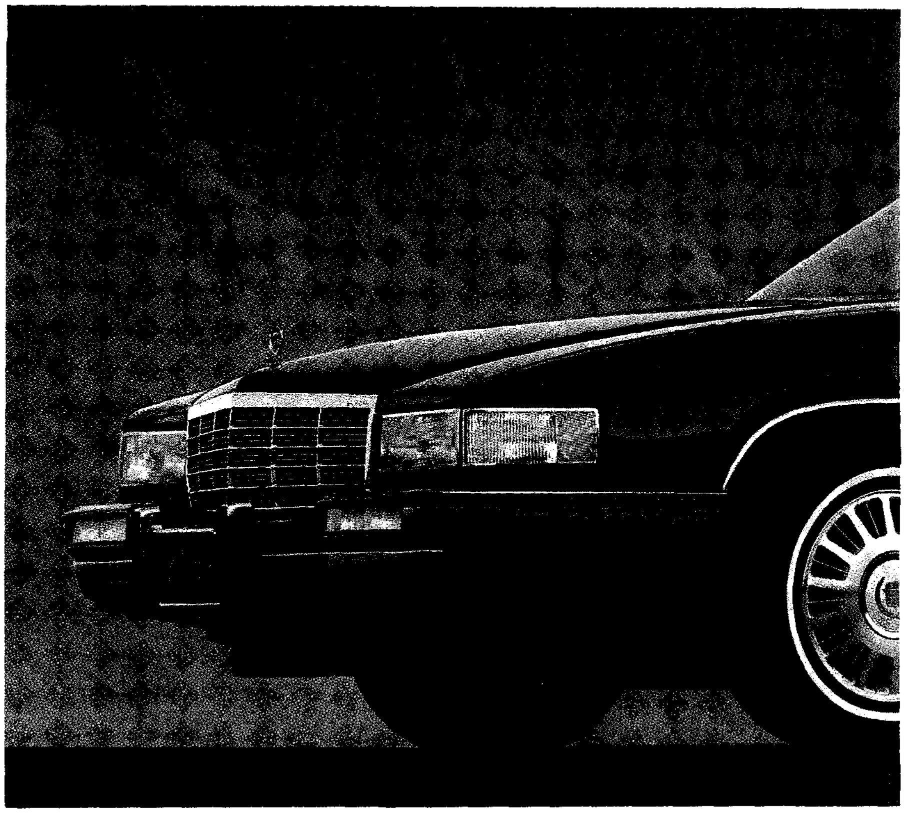

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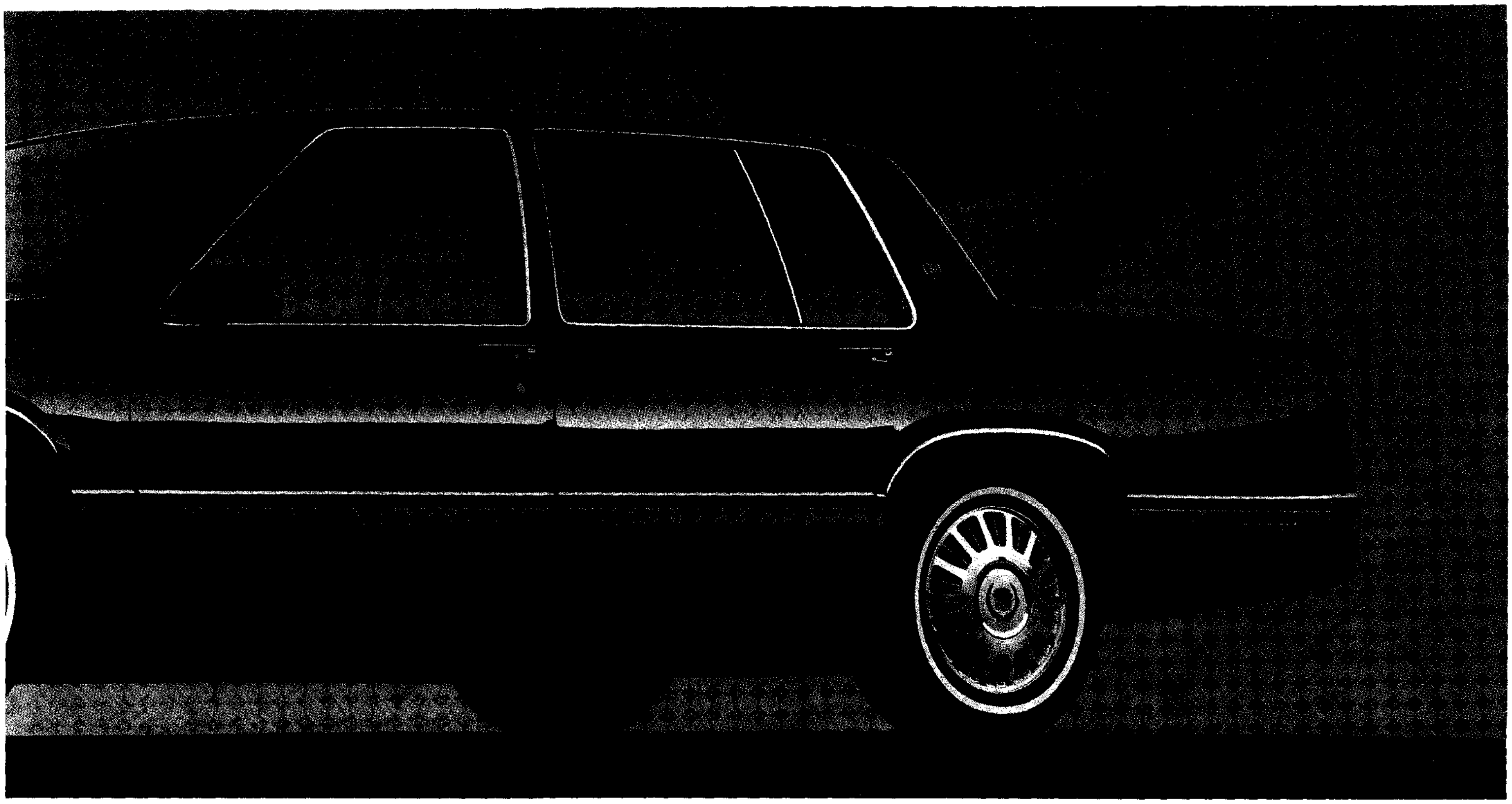

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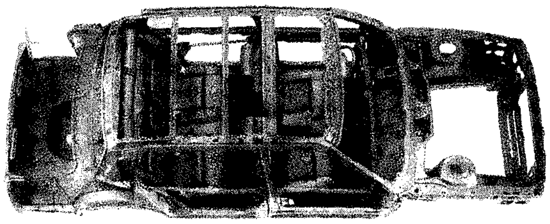

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er, fashioning an extra-long lance. They attached an oxygen hose to the lance. All four men held the lance steady, and they fished the lance up into the furnace.

I stood with a crowd on a walkway watching Millett and his men. There was a hissing sound as oxygen flowed from the lance. They probed the lance delicately into the furnace's underbelly. Suddenly, there was a brilliant flash and a deafening explosion under the furnace. Something had gone wrong.

The furnacemen went up the stairs in a catlike blur, clawing at each other, climbing each other's backs, with their mouths clamped shut and their eyes white with panic. Millett flailed in the center of the knot. They left their lance behind them, suspended in midair, and it fell into the depths of the melt shop, trailing its loose hose.

When professionals are running, it's time to go. The crowd stampeded, breaking northward along the furnace deck, but Millett and the furnacemen gathered at the top of the stairs and regrouped, peering at the furnace, and their words rolled over the deck: "Fucking hell! God damn it!" They started to laugh. "That son of a bitch popped! Nothing but a damn oxygen pop!"

The oxygen had entered the hole and found iron gas in there. The two gases mixed and exploded with a crack like a stick of dynamite.

The taphole was not damaged. Millet and the furnacemen went back down the stairs and lanced the taphole a second time. There was a second flash and boom. The pop routed them, cursing, up the stairs. They regrouped for a third try, and this time, as they probed the lance into the furnace, there came a whoosh, a burst of warmth, a sound like the wind, and the pour began. A murmur went up from the crowd. The murmur rose into yells as the pour intensified. The four men scattered up the stairs through a turmoil of sparks, waving their fists. They had tapped a heat out of a furnace, one of the oldest rituals in human industry. A splendid golden light filled the melt shop, coming from the underbelly of the furnace.

Since the casting machine itself wasn't ready, there was nothing to do but pour the steel onto the floor of the melt shop. The ladle crane lowered the ladle down to the floor and tipped it over, and steel dribbled into a line of pits dug in the floor. The steel hit the dirt with a frying sound. The pits filled up, one by one, like water going into an ice tray, as the ladle moved over them, flooding the west end of the melt shop with a red glow and an ovenlike dry heat. The heat pushed the crowd back.

Keith Busse, the plant manager, lowered his dark glasses and grinned. "I never saw Mark so frightened in his life, scrambling up those stairs!" he shouted. "I called Mr. Iverson. I told him we'd tapped a heat in ten hours. What a marvellous day!"

The steelworkers discussed the first heat:

"That went pretty smooth, like a cow on ice."

"As of now, this isn't a construction project anymore, this is a steel mill."

"I saw liquid steel for the first time in my life today. It looked like Mars. The power that stuff puts out. I planned my escape."

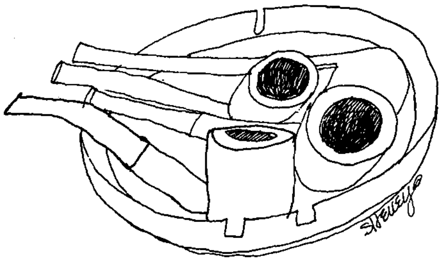
"I was as nervous as a dog shitting on a log chain."

"One thing is for sure: the first cast won't take any ten hours. Once they put steel into that caster, it's like lighting a fuse on a stick of dynamite. You light a fuse and something's going to happen real quick."

"I'll tell you a little speech Iverson give us. He said, 'I know what the American Dream is. The American Dream is to make more money this year than you did last year.' And I tell you what: I got one thousand six hundred and fifty shares of Nucor stock, and as of this morning it was worth ninety thousand dollars."

A ladle-crane operator sat in a corner, watching the ladle pour steel on the floor. His name was Mike Hinz, and he told me his dream. Hinz was a quiet young guy with a dark-red beard, a round, rough face, and a rather shy laugh. "I'm hoping my retirement plan will hit six figures," he said, raising his voice over the uproar of the steel fires. "Then I'm going to buy my motor home and retire."

"We all have a dream, right?" said a woman in a hard hat, a grandmother named Earleen Kurtz, who was a Nucor maintenance worker. "I farmed eighty acres. I raised corn and soybeans, a little bit of wheat. I raised a few hogs, fifty head was all. You can't farm eighty acres. I sold the land and got out. I want to be a ladle-crane operator. I want to carry steel from the furnace to the casting machine. I don't know if they'll give me that job. They only want the most experienced people to carry ladles of steel. I'll probably end up on a scrap crane. But to carry a ladle to the caster, that's the dream. That's the dream."



ONE overwhelming question haunted Keith Busse, and that was the business question. Could the Crawfordsville steel mill—assuming it got into production—earn a profit? The mill would in theory produce quantities of two types of steel: hot-rolled steel and cold-rolled steel. Hot-rolled steel, known commonly in the trade as hot band, would be the sole product of the compact-strip-production machine. Hot band is about as thick as cardboard (from one-tenth to one-quarter of an inch thick). The material has a rough blue-black surface, or, if it has been pickled in acid and oiled, it has a silvery surface. Cold-rolled steel, on the other hand, is gleaming smooth and very thin (rolled down to a few hundredths of an inch thick), and can be painted or covered with enamel. About forty per cent of the hot-band steel that came out of the C.S.P. would be sent to the cold mill.

Hot band is for heavy and sometimes crude applications. The frame of an automobile is made of hot-band steel. Hot band is also made into wheel rims, automobile-bumper stock, dumpsters, garbage trucks, door hinges, pipe brackets, water towers, earth-moving equipment, railroad cars, truck beds, bedframes (almost everyone sleeps on hot-band steel), shovels, electrical-outlet boxes, harvesting machines, tractors, back-end loaders, architectural railings, the guts of washing machines and dryers. When hot band is rolled up into a tube, it becomes pipe.

Cold-rolled steel is made into automobile fenders, the exterior shells of washing machines, dryers, and hot-water heaters, and the shells of microwave ovens. Cold-rolled steel goes into the guts of computers and VCRs. A lot of it goes into offices, in the form of filing cabinets, lighting fixtures, hung-ceiling brackets, radiators, vents.

Steel is cheaper than chicken parts. During good times, hot-band steel sells for around $360 a ton—eighteen cents a pound. In bad times, the price of hot band goes through the floor with the velocity of a wrecking ball. Busse hoped that the C.S.P. would manufacture hot band at a cost of about $250 a ton—twelve and a half cents a pound. That would make Nucor the world's low-cost producer of hot band. Twelve and a half cents a pound was counting everything—labor, energy, materials, depreciation, taxes, insurance, overhead. Busse believed that the most efficient large steel companies in the United States enjoyed, at best, a manufacturing cost of $310 a ton for hot-band steel—fifteen or sixteen cents a pound—when you counted all of Big Steel's costs, including insurance, taxes, depreciation, and corporate overhead.

What about the Asian and Latin-American producers? Busse believed that the cost of shipping steel across an ocean more than offset the lower cost structure of the foreign steelmakers. "I don't think the Japanese can land a coil of hot-rolled steel here for less than three hundred and fifty dollars a ton," he said. "And I doubt if the Koreans can do it for less than three hundred and ten. And the truth is that the South Americans are not very efficient producers."

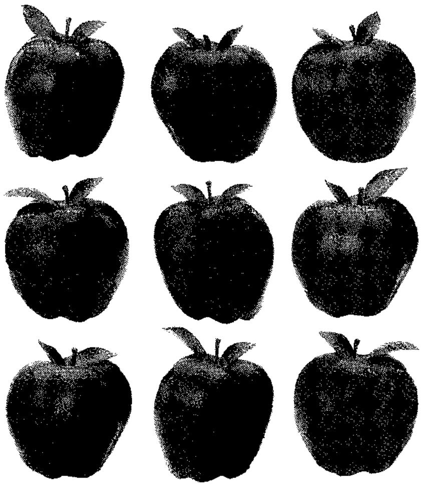
If the C.S.P. could make steel for $250 a ton, then Keith Busse would have something like a fifty-dollar-a-ton cost advantage over some of the world's most efficient steel producers—a cost advantage of two and a half cents per pound. American steel might be the world's cheapest steel. Busse might be able to undersell everyone. If he could undersell the world, then his net after-tax profit might come in at around two to three cents a pound, depending on the price of steel. Three cents a pound in profit, at best. It didn't sound like much, but it added up to a net profit of forty to sixty dollars per ton of steel. On a million tons of steel a year, that could add up to between $40 million and $60 million in net profits per year. The Nucor Corporation, with twenty-two factories besides the Crawfordsville Project, had earned $50 million in 1987 and $70 million in 1988, an exceptionally good year. So Keith Busse might be able to practically double his corporation's profits with one factory. The arithmetic stared him in the face. It also stared Wall Street in the face. Nucor's stock was trading high, on high hopes. If the profits didn't materialize, Wall Street would cut Nucor's stock off at the knees.

Meanwhile, the day approached when a casting crew would pour molten steel into the thin-slab-casting machine for the first time. The casting machine had been fabricated by SMS Schloemann-Siemag, the German company; the casting crew was made up mostly of local men from the Crawfordsville area, although a handful of German engineers had come over to offer advice. The crew began to perform practice runs known as dry casts; that is, they operated the casting machine without molten steel.

The casting machine, housed in the casting tower, formed the first module of the compact-strip-production machine. The casting deck, at the top of the casting tower, became a place of feverish activity. Changing groups of German engineers, Nucor steelworkers, venders, contractors, curious third parties, and, perhaps, paid industrial spies gathered in clumps, talking and gossiping. Crowds gathered under an empty ladle that sat on a car above the deck. The ladle threw a deep shadow over the people and over the deck. Mark Millett roamed the deck, stopping here and there to chat with people, slapping some people on the shoulder—"Super! Excellent! Ahoy, mate! What time is it?"

Hot metal would be fed into the casting machine in vast quantities, under delicate control, by means of valves—at a rate of as much as one ton every eighteen seconds. Steel would drop into the casting machine in two stages, being pulled downward by the force of gravity. In the first stage, steel would drain from a hole in the bottom of the ladle into a tundish—an intermediate holding tank that looks and operates like a bathtub. In the second stage, steel would drain through a hole in the bathtub, through a nozzle, and into the machine.

The devices that controlled the flow were prone to failure; they were a big worry. Nothing known to science can contain pressurized liquid steel for more than a short time without rotting away. The steel that came out of the bottom of the ladle would be under a



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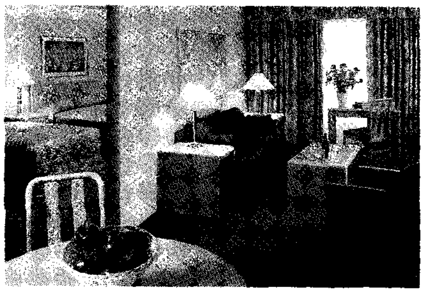

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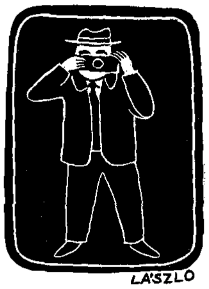
pressure of fifty pounds per square inch, created by a twelve-foot head of steel sitting in the ladle. The valve at the bottom of the ladle was known as a ladle slidegate, and it was made of alumina graphite—a fused sapphire-like material. The valve that controlled the flow coming out of the tundish into the nozzle was known as a stopper rod, and it was also made of alumina graphite. It plugged the drain hole in the tundish, the bathtub.

The Nucor employee who was supposed to make sure that the casting machinery, the hot metal, and the men worked smoothly together was the foreman in charge of the first cast—David Thompson, thirty-four years old, the son of a hot-metal man (working in the steel industry seems to run in some families). Thompson's assignment was to lead an inexperienced crew of local men to a successful casting of steel with an untried and unproved machine. The Nucor people called him Big Dave. He was six feet four, and had been an offensive tackle on his college football team. He was a serious-minded person, wearing glasses, but with the heavy shoulders and packed midriff of an athlete who has spent time throwing himself full speed into blocking sleds. "I never thought I'd have a chance in this industry, after what happened," he said, referring to the near-collapse of the American steel industry in the nineteen-eighties. He turned to his crew. "Cast mode!" he said, looking at a stopwatch. "Emergency procedures!" The crew hurried here and there. "Do it again!" Thompson pretended that the machine's computers had crashed. "Go manual!" he said, and at those words a steelworker named Steve Stout grabbed the handle of a lever on the side of the bathtub and jerked the lever up and down. If the machine's computers failed, then the hand lever would be used to control the flow of hot metal into the machine.



No one knew exactly what would happen when molten steel was poured into the German casting machine. Perhaps nothing would happen—the machine might become plugged with frozen steel. Or it might belch smoke, burst into flames, vomit steel up through its mouth and across the deck. Or it might break out—that is, drench its moving parts with liquid steel pouring downward through the tower. Or the Kolakowski mold might explode. Steel-casting molds had been known to detonate violently, generally killing steelworkers. The Kolakowski mold was the heart of the casting machine, a copper funnel in which liquid steel would solidify. It was cooled with high-pressure water, running through bore holes drilled in it. If the water in the bore holes flashed to steam, the mold could go off like a bomb, throwing copper shrapnel and about one ton of liquid steel in all directions.

Manfred Kolakowski, the inventor, paced the casting deck all day and much of the night. He had deep bags under his eyes, and he often stood by the mouth of the machine with his hands on his knees, gazing downward into the mold, listening to American steelworkers clattering around inside the machine. The mold was a copper-lined slit in the top surface of the machine, which protruded a foot above the deck. He turned to me. "You know how the song goes, 'She changes from day to day'? Our machine, she changes from day to day," he said. "We want to *cast*," he added, making a fist.

Janice Roach, the safety director, prowled the casting deck. Her eyes flickered behind glasses, looking left and right and up and down, as she poked into corners and inspected trash cans. She wore a furnace worker's green jacket, and her hard hat displayed a red cross. She stopped a steelworker and pointed to a wheelbarrow full of empty Coca-Cola cups. "I want this out of here before we put any heat on this deck."

He nodded.

She continued her patrol. "These guys seem real tense," she said to me. "I don't like that. That kind of tension falls one step beyond respect for steel into fear of steel."

"How do you feel?" I said.

"How do I feel? I don't know how I feel. I feel nervous."

Liquid steel weighs four hundred and eighty-four pounds per cubic foot. Steel is eight times as heavy as water. When the metal is in a fluid state, it flows with remarkable speed. A big spill can cover a casting deck in the blink of an eye, and to stand ankle-deep in a splash is to die, because the steel gives off enough radiant heat to burn the skin off your body.

Janice Roach beckoned to Thompson, the casting foreman. "Dave, get these nitrogen tanks out of here. Will you do that for me?"

Thompson, chewing a toothpick, said he'd oblige.

"Keith Busse is pacing in his office," she remarked to me. "We always know when he's pacing. You can hear his boots in the hall, going in and out of his office. He's getting himself half cups of coffee all day." She gave me a penetrating glance. "Do you know where the exits are up here?" she asked.

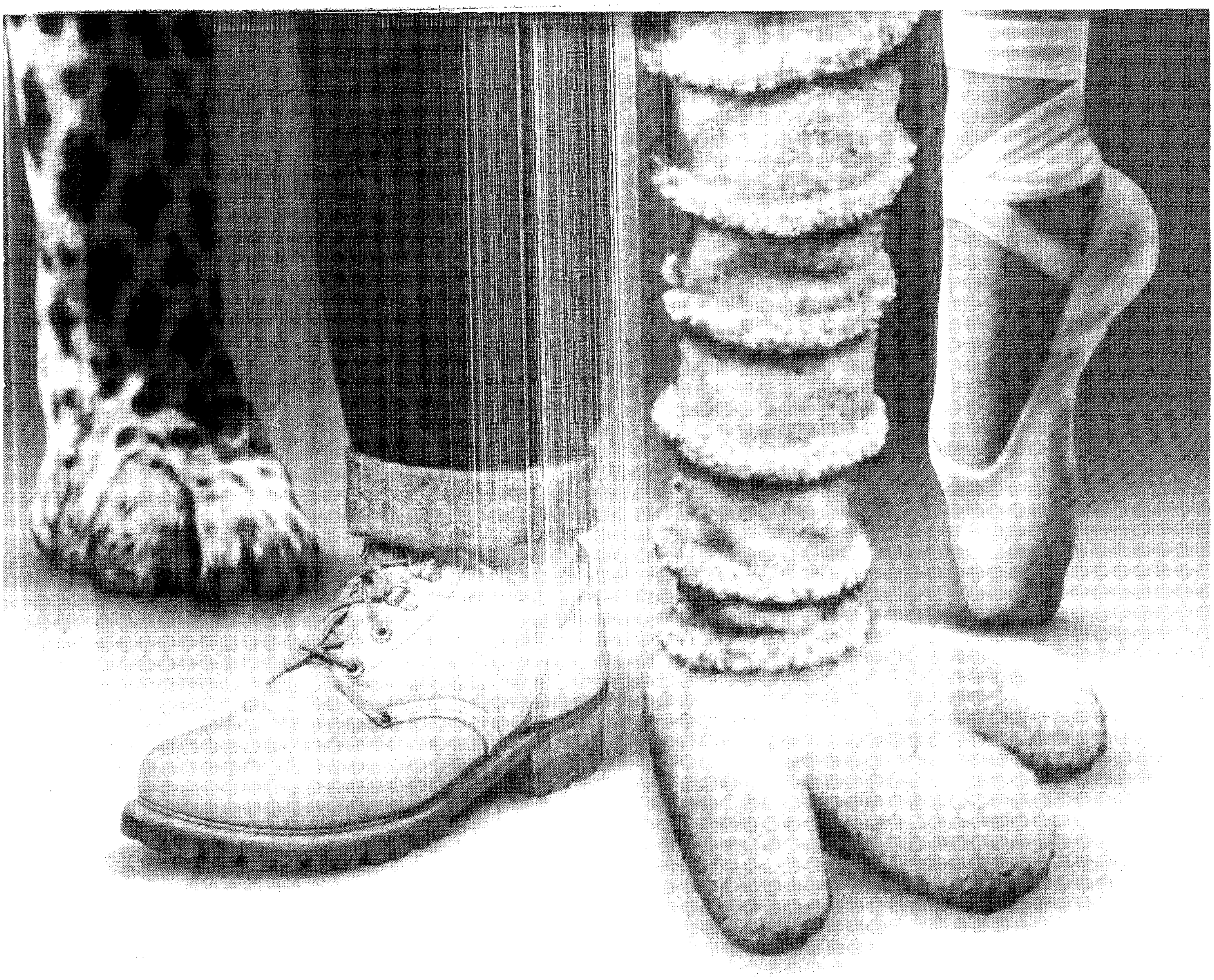
Two stairways led down from the casting deck, one at either end of the deck. I pointed to them both. The stairs descended thirty-two feet to the floor of the mill, in flights interrupted by landings. It was a long way to the ground.

"The men have timed themselves," she said. "They can get down those stairs in seventeen seconds."

Joseph Kinney, the executive director of the National Safe Workplace Institute, a private organization in Chicago, does not love the Nucor Corporation. He trails around after Nucor, visiting small towns where Nucor operates, talking to people, gathering reports on accidents at Nucor plants. I called Kinney on the telephone to hear what he had to say about Nucor. He had plenty to say.

"Frankly, from our point of view, Nucor represents what is wrong with American business," Kinney said. "At Nucor, the burden of safety is on the plant manager. My belief is that when you operate in a decentralized environment, without other kinds of corporate checks, you can have health and safety problems."

James Coblin, Nucor's personnel manager, provided me with what he said is a complete list of accidental fatalities of Nucor employees between the beginning of 1980 through the year 1990. The list, which Coblin developed with the help of Marsh & McClennan, Nucor's workers'-compensation insurance broker, describes nine deaths in those eleven years. It also describes two deaths of construction workers and the death of a vender at Nucor plants—that is, deaths of employees of other companies who were working at a Nucor plant when they were killed. The vender who died may have been working under Nucor



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supervision, so I will count his death as a Nucor fatality. Therefore, Nucor experienced ten fatalities in eleven years. Six of them happened at various times in Nucor Vulcraft plants, and four happened at various times in the steel minimills.

The National Safety Council reports that the accidental death-rate in all American manufacturing industries appears to be about six deaths per hundred thousand workers per year. The large steel companies are doing better than average, at 4.6 deaths per hundred thousand. During the past eleven years, Nucor's electric steel minimills experienced a death rate of either thirteen or seventeen deaths per hundred thousand workers, depending on whether you count the death of the vender that I have included in my count. (One death at a company as small as Nucor has a large effect on its death rate.) Nucor's death rate, in any case, is either 2.8 or 3.7 times the average at Big Steel. Compared to American manufacturing industries as a whole, Nucor's death rate, in its steel minimills, is from one and a half to three times the average, depending on what the American average really is and whether one counts the vender death at Nucor.

In Nucor's Vulcraft plants, the fatality rate is worse, at twenty-five deaths per hundred thousand—probably about twice the average for that type of plant. One would like to know how Nucor's death rate compares to other electric steel minimills. But there are no death-rate statistics for the minimills. Nobody knows how many steelworkers are dying in the little American mills. While the little mills may be among the most efficient on earth, someone may be paying a price for the glory.

Coblin, Nucor's personnel manager, claims that efficient production in itself doesn't cause fatalities at Nucor. He says that accidents happen when a plant is operating slowly, at low volume. In his words, "We have found that we have accidents when we're running slow, when we're starting and stopping a plant a lot." Startups are dangerous times, because the production line grinds to a halt frequently and has to be re-started. A lot of experimentation takes place, as workers and managers try to wring higher production from a manufacturing line that is giving them all kinds of problems. Nucor has had seven major startups in the past decade. Furthermore, Nucor staffs its new plants with young people, who have little or no experience, and such workers are killed more often than seasoned veterans.

Nucor has very few employees working behind desks. The people are out in the mills, exposed to machinery. The company fears white-collar bloating, rejects unions and works rules, avoids authoritarian management, and motivates its workers by means of production bonuses. Nucor, having thrown work rules out the window, has developed an uncanny ability to motivate its line workers to play hard and fast in the startup and operation of a plant—that is, to take business risks, operational risks, and even personal risks, in their efforts to raise production. For some workers, the risks are fatal.

THE day scheduled for the first cast, Friday, June 16th, broke cold. At seven o'clock in the morning, the casting crew gathered before the door of the melt shop, and Big Dave Thompson spoke to the crew. "It'll be a while before we get a heat of steel," he said. "We want to go through more simulations. Do them as fast as you can. These are the pre-game festivities. Show them the play we want to run. Full-dress rehearsal. In silvers." Silvers are aluminized Kevlar-and-graphite suits, to protect against steel splashes.

"Silvers? This ain't no fashion statement," a steelworker said.

"You keep your mouth shut, boy," Thompson said. The crew grinned.

Someone's walkie-talkie crackled and said, "T minus five hours and counting."

"Let's go!" Thompson said.

A rumble infiltrated the melt shop: the south electric-arc furnace had struck an arc. The men cheered, nervously.

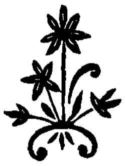
Franz Küper, the SMS project manager, paced the casting deck, wearing a white hard hat above gold-rimmed spectacles. His mouth was tight. "Anything can happen today," he said. "I am not surprised by anything anymore."

An engineer named Patrick Owens, who worked for an American subsidiary of SMS called SMS Concast, sat at a video screen in the control pulpit that looked out across the casting deck. Owens' job was to operate the machine's computer controls. "I've got my cigarettes," he said. "I've got my furnace glasses, I've got my silver suit. And if this machine goes into a steady state I'll put on my silvers and watch it make steel. And then I'll hit the bars and I'll sober up next Monday."

The furnace died, and a hush fell over the melt shop.

Someone said, "The breakers are tripping out again."

The furnace resumed operation with a drumroll. The furnacemen were melting at near full power today, at sixty-five megawatts. A few minutes later, the power failed throughout the Crawfordsville Project. Sixty-five million watts went off line. Silence fell over the melt shop as the electric-arc furnace stopped melting steel.



"I don't know what's happened," Millett said, looking around. Suddenly, his walkie-talkie began to shout, "Mark Millett! Mark Millett!"

Emergency on the furnace deck.

Millett took off at a dead run for the arc furnace. He ran downstairs, and five hundred feet through the nave of the melt shop, and up a flight of stairs to the furnace deck, taking the steps three at a time.

Water had stopped circulating inside the walls of the arc furnace when the power died—a dangerous situation, because the furnace could overheat and explode. Fearing that the furnace was about to pop, the furnacemen had abandoned the furnace deck. The furnace hadn't popped, and now they were edging their way back to the deck along a walkway, to study the situation.

"That son of a bitch is hot," one furnaceman muttered, squinting at the furnace.

"We're not off to a good start today," another said.

Millett went into the pulpit to discuss the emergency with the Swiss furnace experts. "You can get a vapor lock in that son of a bitch," a furnaceman said. "Then when you start it up, the furnace'll pop a panel."

Another furnaceman took me aside and told me what to look for if the furnace was getting ready to pop. "Keep your eye on James McCaskill," he said, nodding toward the thin expert in oxygen lances. "If you see James running, then you just follow him. And if you see any *Germans* running get out of the building and don't look back."

Abruptly, the furnace's roof moved away from the furnace pot, under auxiliary power. A puff of accumulated heat boiled out. Millett hurried out of the pulpit, and just then the lights came back on. With a whoosh, cooling water began to circulate inside the furnace. "Excellent!" Millett said. "It didn't blow up!"

Millett ran back to the casting tower, found Dave Thompson, and said to him, "It's going slowly at the furnace. It'll be a long day. It'll be four or five o'clock this afternoon before you get a heat of steel. Get the key players together and have a chat with them about all the procedures. You'll need to eat, too. The way things are going, we may not cast until midnight."

The morning gave way to afternoon while the furnacemen struggled with the furnace, lancing down the heat several times, and then Millett had to inform his boss, Keith Busse, that he had accidentally overcooked the steel. Millett's people had all wanted to get in on the lancing, and they had blown too much oxygen into the bath. That had burned all the carbon out of the metal. Millett's boys had unintentionally made an ultra-low-carbon steel—almost pure iron. Possibly Millett would have to dump this bath onto the floor and start over, with fresh junk.

While Millett conferred with the furnacemen, Busse paced the deck, with his hands in his hip pockets. "They've been patty-cakin' around and now they've screwed up," Busse muttered to me on one pass. On the next pass he said, "They've done played with the steel too long and they burned all the carbon out of it!" And on the next pass: "They tell me it's awfully hard to put carbon back into steel once they've taken it out!" Next pass: "They should have tapped the heat when they had the carbon right, instead of patty-cakin' around! They should have tapped the heat and sent the steel downstream and *forced* the issue at the caster!" The arc furnace crackled. "Ultra-low carbon!" he shouted to me over the roar. "They pay big money for steel like that! Only problem is, we're not trying to make that kind of steel today! And Mark knows that!"

Millett came up with a proposal to dip the electrodes into the liquid steel. He thought that might resurrect his soup. Dipping the electrodes into liquid steel would burn up the electrodes, but they were made of graphite—pure car-

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"He's not in, but this fresh snowfall will make him easy to track."

bon. The electrodes would dissolve in the bath, adding carbon to it, turning it into a mild steel.

The furnacemen kept the furnace door open to watch the dipping operation. The electrodes descended and touched liquid metal. There was a chatter of arcs, sparks zoomed out through the slag door, and the electrodes dipped four inches into the bath. The noise diminished to a deep hum. Electrodes buried in steel don't make much noise. They short out on the power system. A minute later, the electrodes were withdrawn from the metal with a horrifying sound.

James McCaskill examined the electrode tips through dark glasses. "We just ate up fourteen hundred dollars' worth of electrode," he commented.

At four-thirty in the afternoon, Millett declared a finished heat of steel. The furnacemen tilted the furnace and opened the taphole, and a bright, heavy, liquescent pour of mild steel rumbled into a ladle below the furnace. The crane carried the ladle up to the metallurgy deck to be kept warm until Thompson called for hot metal.

AT seven o'clock in the evening, a squall line appeared to the north of Crawfordsville, and the sun set. It was a sweet June evening, near the summer solstice. Flycatchers dodged around the melt shop. The moon budded in the east, as red as a berry, then turned white. At the New York Stock Exchange, Nucor common had closed the day at fifty-six and a quarter, up seven-eighths of a point on heavy volume. No one on the casting deck ate dinner; no one wanted to eat solid food. The crew drank Mountain Dew and smoked cigarettes for their dinner. Some of the men had worked at the plant all the previous night; they had now been awake for thirty-six hours.

I put on a set of silvers. First, I wrapped the booties around my legs—the booties resembled Frankenstein boots, with a spat that covered the foot, except that my toes were exposed. I decided that I could spare a few toes if a splatter hit my feet. There were no pants, just a silver coat, sort of like a raincoat. It was too short and did not cover the groin sufficiently for my taste. I tried another silver coat. It was much too large for me, but at least it hung below the knees. I put on a leather neck shield, which hung from the brim of my hard hat. The silvers were surprisingly light and airy, and they crinkled when I moved. It was difficult to believe that the material could stop a splash. To the brim of my hard hat I clipped a set of smoked furnace glasses, for observing the steel.

A siren went off. Manfred Kolakowski smiled at the sound. He crossed the deck to a locker and put on a set of silvers. Mark Millett, also wearing silvers, shook hands with Kolakowski. "Good luck, Manfred," he said.

Kolakowski said, "When you are with child, we say in German you are 'in good hope.' We are in good hope tonight." He went off to a corner of the deck and paced alone, with his hands behind his back, staring at the floor, staring into space, in good hope.

The tundish, or bathtub, had been placed over the mouth of the Kolakowski mold, resting on a tundish car. A white ceramic nozzle hung down from the belly of the bathtub, at the site of the stopper hole, and protruded between the lips of the mold. The siren grew louder. It signalled the movement of the ladle full of steel toward the casting deck, carried by a travelling crane at the roof of the building. A red warning light, like a police light, began to flash above the deck, illuminating the men's silver coats with red reflections.

At 7:55 P.M., the steelworkers seemed to pull into themselves.

"You got a cigarette?"

"We got time for one more? Yeah!"

"Heat's gonna be here in five minutes."

On the floor at the base of the casting tower, a crowd of Nucor employees gathered. A cluster of people appeared on the exit stairs—people who were not wearing silvers but were anxious to watch the casting crew pour metal into the machine. The crane deposited the ladle on a ladle car at one end of the casting deck. It contained a hundred tons of molten steel. The ladle car began to inch the ladle toward the bathtub, and the deck shuddered slightly under the weight of the steel. The ladle was absolutely huge. It blocked

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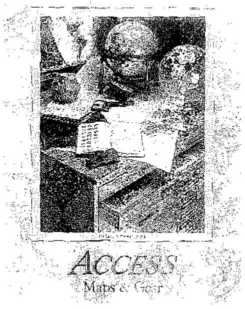

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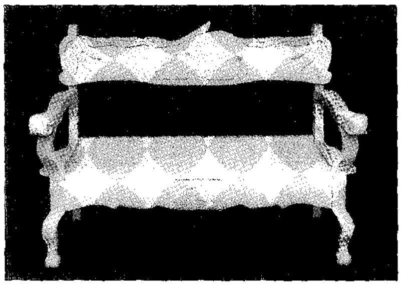

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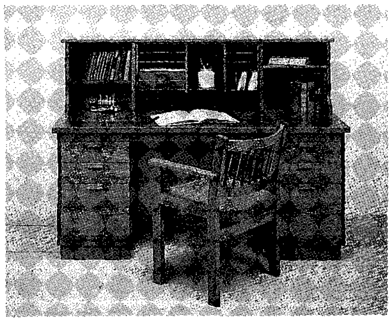

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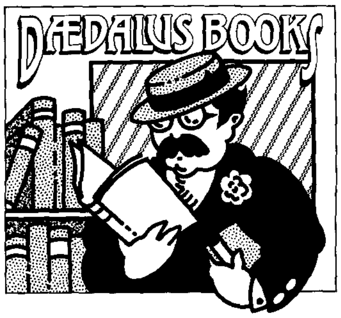

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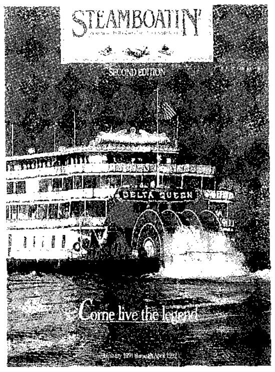

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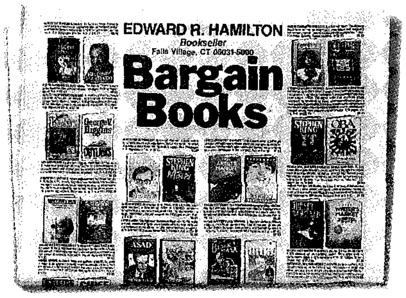

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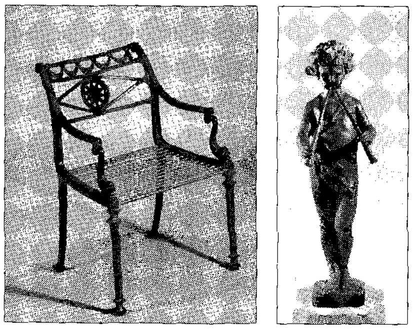

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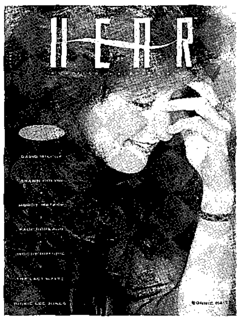

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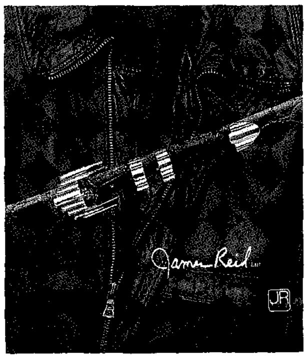

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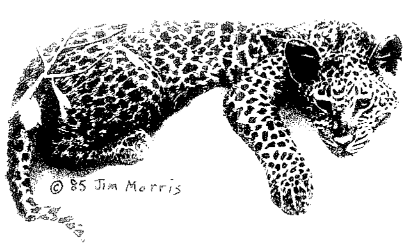

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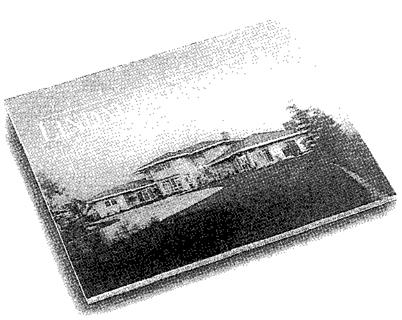

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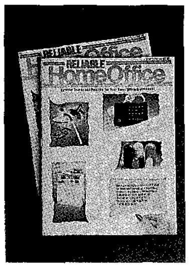

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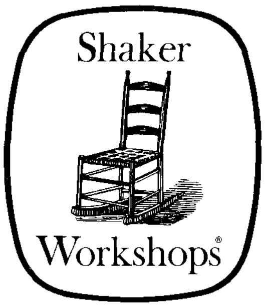

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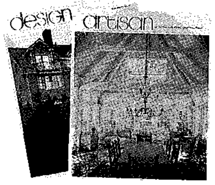

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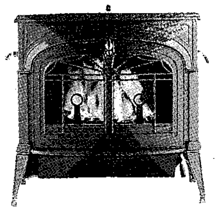

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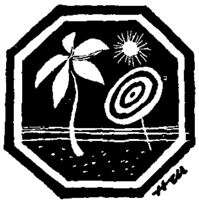
the glow of lights shining on the ceiling of the melt shop, throwing the steelworkers into shadow.

A steelworker named Ken Kinsey rolled a wheelbarrow over to the machine. The wheelbarrow held a plastic bag full of secret gray mold powder, to be fed into the machine along with the molten steel, in order to prevent the steel from sticking to the inner faces of the mold. Kinsey slit the bag and dumped its contents in a heap beside the mold. "I've got mold-powder fever," he muttered.



At 8 P.M., Thompson said in a calm voice, "Cast mode." It alerted everyone that Thompson was in control of the deck, and that the sequence of steps leading to a cast had begun. All eyes were on Thompson. "Open slidegate!" he shouted.

A black pipe at the bottom of the ladle moved sidewise, two holes lined up, and steel came through. It was a full-stroke free opening. A hiss and a warm glow shot from the valve. The hiss mounted to a roar. A wave of light and heat washed over us, cooking our faces. The metal emerged from the slidegate at breathtaking volume, a rocket nozzle firing into the bathtub. The bathtub filled rapidly, and, as it filled, the metal rolled in the bathtub, and howled, and seemed to be trying to escape. The bathtub popped and crackled and groaned under the rapidly increasing weight of the steel. A golden-yellow light spilled out of the top of the bathtub and illuminated the bottom of the ladle.

"Temperature," Thompson said.

A steelworker named Dick Haltom climbed up on the tundish car and stabbed a lance deep into the bathtub to take the temperature of the metal. The lance failed to sense any temperature. Haltom yanked out the lance and threw it across the deck, and it bounced away in a rain of sparks. He grabbed a new lance, put it in the bath, still got no temperature, and threw that lance away. Steel continued to rumble through the slidegate into the bathtub, at a rate of one ton every eighteen seconds. Haltom couldn't get a temperature reading, and the bathtub was filling up quickly, threatening to overflow and flood the deck.

Thompson considered aborting. He didn't want to do that. He decided to press on with the cast but try to throttle back the flow of hot metal into the bathtub before it overflowed, to allow Haltom time to get a temperature reading. "Cut it back!" he shouted, and the pour was reduced to a drool.

A foreman studied a gauge. "Twenty thousand!" he called out. Those words meant that twenty thousand pounds of liquid steel sat in the bathtub.

The bathtub was a little bit overfilled. They had intended to fill it with eighteen thousand pounds of hot metal—nine tons—before they started the cast.

Haltom shoved a third probe into the bathtub, and, finally, on an illuminated board above the pulpit the temperature of the steel appeared in red digits: 2830 degrees Fahrenheit.

Thompson turned and studied the number. The steel was a little bit too cold according to what the Germans had told him about the proper casting temperature of steel for this machine. They had told him that molten steel that was a little too cold might jam inside the machine, triggering a breakout. Thompson didn't believe the Germans. He decided to put metal in the machine. The first thing was to get the slidegate open again.

"Open slidegate," he said.

A hiss came from the ladle, and the flow of molten steel into the bathtub resumed. The light struck our faces.

Thompson wanted steel inside the machine *now*. He grabbed a telephone receiver from the wall and said into it, "Stopper open."

Patrick Owens, in the pulpit, pressed a button ordering the machine's control computer to open the bathtub stopper, to let metal run into the Kolakowski mold. Nothing happened.

"We're on auto," Owens said to Thompson over the telephone. "It's trying to open and it's not opening."

Thompson's mind was racing. He realized (he recalled later) that the bathtub's stopper rod must be welded to the bathtub's drain hole by a layer of frozen steel, a skull. He realized that the delay in taking the temperature had allowed steel to solidify around the drain hole. The stopper was frozen shut.

Meanwhile, the bathtub went on filling up with steel. The bathtub was now groaning with hot metal: one ton, eighteen seconds; one ton, eighteen seconds. A familiar skunky smell of hot slag and liquid steel filled the air.

"Twenty-five thousand!" the foreman cried. Twenty-five thousand pounds of hot metal sat in the bathtub. It was threatening to overflow.

To hell with the computer. "*Manual!*" Thompson shouted. "*Go manual!*"

Steve Stout, holding the lever on the side of the bathtub, threw his weight on the lever. Nothing happened. The stopper was welded tightly into the drain hole.

Thompson gave a hand signal, and two steelworkers joined Stout, the three of them putting their weight on the lever, wrestling with it. The stopper came open with a jerk.

A bright flash occurred at the nozzle, inside the mold's copper lips. With a cough and a hiss, the nozzle disgorged steel into the machine. A clear, beautiful light streamed out of the mold and around the men in silvers, who knelt in the light. They appeared to be praying. They were only doing their jobs. And then there came the sound. Because the mold had a curved copper surface, it focussed the sound like a horn. The horn gave off a deep, sucking, bubbling metallic note as it filled up with steel.

Stout, the leverman, discovered something new. He discovered that he could not control the lever. It dragged and bucked against his grip, tugged by the sheer weight of the metal running through the drain hole into the mold.

Thompson shouted a countdown over the sound: "One! Two! Three! Four!" At twelve he shouted, "Powder!"

Ken Kinsey began to push powder into the mold with a hoe. Keith Busse crouched behind Kinsey, peering into the mold. Metal squirmed brightly inside.

"Fourteen! Fifteen!" Thompson roared.

The mold now contained nearly a ton of hot metal.

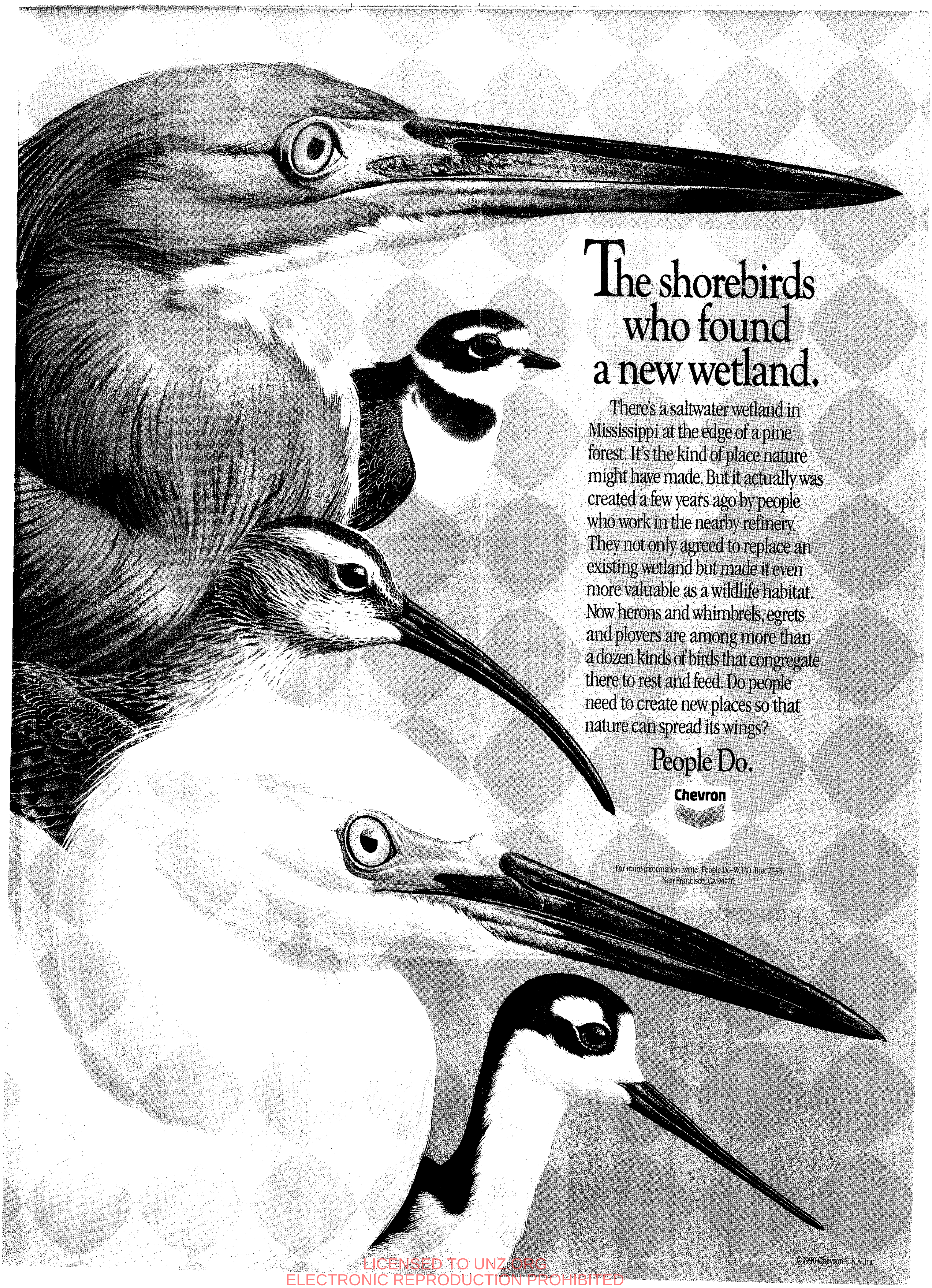
A warning light on a panel near Thompson flashed on. It said "Mold Level Problem."

Stout had completely lost control of the lever. He jerked it up and down.

The emergency panel lit up.

There was a hiss and a wild eruption of sparks. The mold caught fire and boiled. The machine vomited up through its mouth, and Kinsey and Busse, who were leaning over the machine, fell backward. The mouth coughed a burst of droplets.

The steelworkers froze, their forms



The shorebirds who found a new wetland.

There's a saltwater wetland in Mississippi at the edge of a pine forest. It's the kind of place nature might have made. But it actually was created a few years ago by people who work in the nearby refinery. They not only agreed to replace an existing wetland but made it even more valuable as a wildlife habitat. Now herons and whimbrels, egrets and plovers are among more than a dozen kinds of birds that congregate there to rest and feed. Do people need to create new places so that nature can spread its wings?

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silhouetted in a brightening glare coming from the machine's mouth, their arms outstretched or else bent, covering their faces, bedazzled in sparks.

“*Shut it off! Shut it off!*” Thompson shouted.

They couldn't shut it off.

ACCIDENTS with molten steel are instantaneous. In the blink of an eye, we were enveloped in sparks. A gout of flame burst neck high from the mold. Bits of hot steel were flung from the machine. Steel raced out of the mouth and bubbled onto the casting deck around the steelworkers' feet. The steelworkers danced backward. They paused, found their nerve, went on the attack. They rushed into the flames, hopping around rivulets of steel.

The nozzle was still dumping metal into the machine, because Stout, who had clung to the lever, could not get the stopper closed to shut off the pour. Two men joined him. Together they pushed the lever up as far as it would go and held it there, and the rushing of steel into the mold abated. A worker on the far side of the deck stroked the ladle slidegate shut. The slidegate closed, clipping off the pour into the bathtub. Long whoops of a siren sounded overhead. The crane snatched the ladle into the air and away from the casting deck to get the source of molten steel away from the people and the machine. The cast had been aborted.

The mold continued to erupt and burn, even after all movement of steel through the system had been halted. Then the steel fire in the mold died down. A cloud of smoke hung over the casting tower. It was a successfully aborted cast.

The men flung off their silvers, in profound discouragement.

“What happened?” I asked a steelworker.

“Just a mess to clean up,” he said.

Parts of the casting deck were slobbered with twisted, blackened ropes and puddles of skull. Steel fires muttered on the deck. A smell of cooked paint filled the air, and the skull let off an odor of cat piss. The Kolakowski mold was clogged with a huge, heaped skull—a lumpy red stalagmite of metal, breathing flames. The nozzle was buried in the metal, locked into the mold. The men smashed the nozzle with a sledgehammer, to detach the bathtub from the mold.

The inventor had gone off by himself to the end of the deck, where he paced alone.

Mark Millett climbed onto the tundish car and stared down into the hot metal in the bathtub, his face glowing with blackbody radiation coming from the bath. He seemed to be staring into the center of the earth. He thrust a pipe into the bath and idly stirred it, considering what to do next.

Owens, in the pulpit, pressed buttons and entered keyboard commands. Pretty soon, a bottom plug in the mold moved upward. As the plug came up, it pushed the skull out of the mouth of the mold. The steelworkers cut notches in the skull with cutting torches. They fitted chains to the notches and hooked the chains to a crane hook, and the crane dragged the skull free from the mold. The skull came up smoothly and dangled in the air. It was a lump of steel weighing nearly a ton. It was a cast of the Kolakowski mold. It had curved, lens-shaped faces. But it was a warty thing with a red, mean heart.

Kolakowski had come over to watch the operation.

“Our first slab,” an engineer joked to the inventor. “The surface is a bit rough.”

“I am happy now,” Kolakowski said, in a dry voice.

Millett and Busse huddled in conversation.

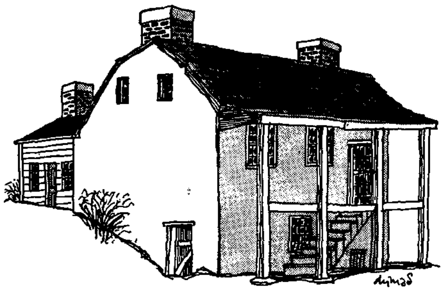
“What's the story, chief?” Busse said. “Pretty nice cast until it aborted.”

Millett had had enough. He wanted to cancel the attempt for two days—at least until Monday—to give his men some rest and a chance to practice more dry casts, casting air rather than steel.

Busse wanted Millett to try for a second cast immediately. There was plenty of hot metal left in that ladle, Busse pointed out.

Millett resisted, upset by the failure.

Busse told Millett that the decision was Millett's. But then he continued to push. Three times he urged him to “go in and do it again.” He said, “Once the decision is made to go out and attack the son of a bitch, you have to see it through to the end.”



Dave Thompson joined the discussion. He said to Millett that his men had come too far tonight; they couldn't turn back at this point. “Let's give it another shot, Mark,” Thompson said. “The guys have lost a round in a fight, and they're ready to come back into the arena for Round Two.”

Millett nodded. “Let's go. Bring in a new tundish,” he said.

“I WAS a little nervous,” Manfred Kolakowski recalled later. It was about midnight now, and he paced the casting deck with his hands in the pockets of his creased slacks. The night had grown cold, and it was cold inside the steel mill, but Kolakowski wore a short-sleeved candy-striped shirt. He seemed oblivious of the chill. He stopped Millett and said to him, “As soon as the steel starts to flow, you have three seconds to adjust the stopper rod, or the mold can overflow.”

A little after midnight, a crane picked up a new bathtub and gradually lowered it toward the mouth of the mold, with the white nozzle protruding from the belly of the bathtub. Dave Thompson put his hands on the bathtub to guide the nozzle down into the machine. At 12:25 A.M., the nozzle entered the lips of the mold.

“Inch it down! Inch it down!” Thompson shouted, wrestling with the bathtub. It weighed seven tons. Suddenly, the crane jerked. The nozzle struck the mold and shattered like an eggshell, dropping pieces of white ceramic down into the machine.

After stunned silence, a groan went up from the crowd.

“We're *done!*” a foreman said, spitting on the deck.

“We busted the nozzle!”

“I can't believe this!”

“Son of a bitch!”

“That's it,” Millett said. “We'll try again on Monday.”

Keith Busse hurried into the crowd of steelworkers. He asked, “Is there any other tundish ready to go?”

No, there were no other bathtubs ready to go. The steelworkers told Busse that if they were going to cast tonight they would have to prepare a new bathtub, first lining it with insulation and then heating it in gas flames. “We're talking four o'clock in the morning before we can get a new tundish,” a foreman said.

Busse, Millett, and Thompson huddled. Millett was shaking his head. He had had enough. Some of the casting crew joined the group. The talk became impassioned. The members of the casting crew were arguing with Millett. Busse joined the argument. The casting crew had refused to go home. They begged Millett to let them prove they could cast steel.

"The troops want to go on," Busse said to Millett.

Millett nodded. He gave an order to proceed with a third attempt to cast. A foreman waved his arm and shouted, "Bring in another tundish! We're going to do it!"

Inside the pulpit, the air had gone high. One feature of a plant startup is that people don't change their clothes for days at a stretch. Kolakowski entered the pulpit and said to Owens, the computer expert, "What next? First, we had an overflow. Then we had a nozzle break off. What next?"

"It will be perfect this time, Manfred," Owens said. Owens took off his hard hat. Its crown was lined with a wadded wet paper towel, a sweat rag. He extracted the sweat rag, put in a fresh wad of dry paper towels, and put the hard hat back on. "Look at it this way," he said to Kolakowski. "By the time we get a cast, it'll be morning, and the bars will be open again. So after we cast we can get a drink, and then maybe we can get into a fight." The inventor looked skeptical.

On the floor of the melt shop, near the casting tower, the casting crew began to plaster the inside of a bathtub with concrete the color and texture of mud. They pressed ceramic boards to the concrete, to pack the bathtub with insulation. They worked fast, slapping mud with trowels.

"We'll get it this time. A breakout is the only thing that will stop us now."

"Don't say that word!"

"This is double-barrelled, from-the-hip action."

"And you guys thought you'd have a pudge-out today."

It was far past midnight, and morning was coming near. By the door of the melt shop, a knot of venders—engineers from other companies that had supplied equipment and expertise to Nucor—smoked cigarettes and discussed the situation in the melt shop.

"These startups are all the same," a vender said. "I saw six shifts in one mill before they got a cast. That one took forty-eight hours."

"How long have they been at this one?"

"Since seven this morning."

"That's not so long."

"Remember that one in Mexico? The heat started at 7 A.M., and they cast the next morning at 5 A.M. It'll be like that."

"Yeah, they'll go until sunrise."

"For these guys, this plant has to work. Not because it's a nice idea but because it's their job."

"Hey, it's a full moon tonight."

The venders had seen everything. Some of them were not entirely impressed by the Nucor Corporation. One of them later told me that this Nucor job made him nervous. "This startup is not as safe as the ones I've seen at Big Steel companies," he said. "There are too many people on that casting deck. There's no fire equipment or fire personnel up there. The big companies always have firefighting equipment on hand when they start up a casting machine."

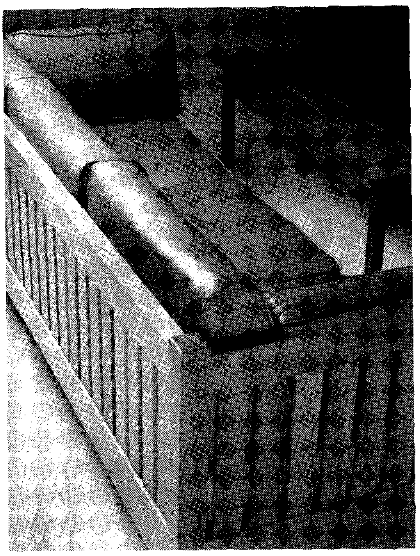
"What good is firefighting equipment?" I asked him.

He nodded thoughtfully. "You can't put out a steel fire," he said. "But the firefighting equipment can help to contain the electrical fires that usually follow a big spill. The other thing is, the Big Steel companies take a lot of time training people. At Big Steel, they spend months running simulations before they pour any steel. Months. I think Nucor is rushing this cast through. And I think they are doing it for two reasons. Number one is they want to put pressure on the people downstream. They want to get the people downstream to finish their work on the downstream end of the production line. And, number two, they're doing it for the stockholders. I don't think either of those is a good reason to rush a cast."

On the deck, Mark Millett was talking to Rodney Mott, the soft-spoken manager of the hot mill. "It looks like we're going to watch the sun rise," Millett said.

"I hope it works this time," Mott said. "There comes a point when extra human effort won't overcome a machinery failure."

THE casting crew, having finished preparing the new bathtub, put it under gas burners to heat it up, and by



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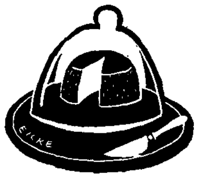
four o'clock in the morning it was red-hot and ready to accept molten steel. The bathtub was fitted into place over the mouth of the casting machine. A siren went off, signalling the movement of the ladle back toward the casting deck. The casting crew put on silvers again.

People had been trickling up the stairs of the casting tower all night, determined to stay on the casting deck this time, come hell or high steel. Faces in the crowd were familiar. Ken Kinsey remarked, "What could be better than four o'clock in the morning to run your first slab?" Dick Haltom, whose job it was to take the temperature of the steel, had gone home, having been awake for forty-eight hours. The scrapyard supervisor, Jim Hoskins, had volunteered to take the temperature of the steel. Manfred Kolakowski paced in a corner. Patrick Owens emerged from the pulpit and remarked to Kolakowski, "You look tired, Manfred." Kolakowski shook his head: not tired. James McCaskill, the lancing expert, loitered at a rail, smoking a cigarette. Janice Roach pushed through the crowd. "Get everybody off the deck!" she shouted. Nobody moved. Mark Millett took off his hard hat and ran a hand through his hair. "This is what Nucor is all about," he said. Keith Busse stood with his back to the crowd, watching the ladle of steel approach the casting deck.



The crane set the ladle on the ladle car, and the car moved the ladle slowly across the casting deck until it came to a halt over the bathtub.

Kinsey and two other steelworkers knocked fists and elbows together, gave a violent shout, and took up their stations around the machine, crouching lightly, their knees slightly bent.

Manfred Kolakowski approached the bathtub and took the lever in his silvered hands. This time, Kolakowski *would* feed the machine.

"Everybody ready?" Thompson said. "Let's go. Open slidegate."

The slidegate opened full stroke, and a heat wave rolled over the casting deck as steel shot into the bathtub. The bathtub filled quickly, with a foreman crying out the weight of the steel in the bathtub at intervals: "Forty three hundred pounds! Five thousand and twenty! Sixty-one hundred pounds! . . ."

Jim Hoskins climbed onto the bathtub car and stared into the rising bath, holding a temperature probe in his hand.

"Fifteen thousand!"

"Temperature," Thompson said, and Hoskins slid the probe into the bath. The temperature came up on the display board: 2778 degrees.

Thompson saw that the steel was a bit too cold for a good cast. But he was not going to abort this one. "Open stopper!" he shouted to the inventor.

Kolakowski heaved downward on the lever to open the bathtub stopper, but nothing happened. Once again, the stopper had been frozen by a clot of skull. Meanwhile, the bathtub was filling with steel. An air of crisis swept the deck.

Kinsey raced over to help Kolakowski. The steelworker and the inventor struggled with the lever, Kinsey shouting, "It won't open!"

"Twenty-one thousand!" the foreman cried.

"God damn it!" someone else shouted.

"Twenty-five thousand!"

"Twenty-seven thousand!"

The pour from the slidegate continued at full volume. A spray of ejecta billowed from the bathtub and splattered over the deck, and the steelworkers ducked.

"Twenty-eight thousand!"

The bathtub was nearing overflow.

"Thirty thousand pounds!"

"God damn it!"

The voices of the steelworkers rose in a tense hysteria.

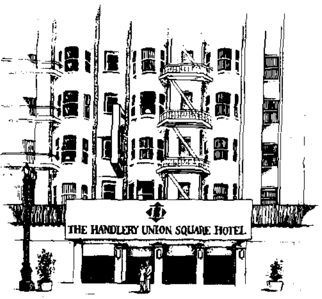
Thompson already knew that somebody was going to have to burn open the bathtub's drain hole with an oxygen lance. That was the only way. Someone was going to have to put an oxygen lance into that bath. Thompson swung around on his feet and cried, "Lance it!"

"Thirty-two thousand!"

The bathtub was within thirty seconds of overflow.

"*Burn it!*" Thompson roared.

He looked around. No one moved. No one knew who was supposed to lance the bath. Thompson grabbed an oxygen lance. He was not wearing a face shield. No time to find a face shield. He cracked the lance valve, and oxygen hissed from the tip of the lance. Thompson jumped onto the edge of the bathtub. He drove the lance into hot metal, fishing the jet through liquid steel, feeling for the drain opening of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the bathtub. He felt the lance strike the stopper. Keeping the tip of the lance against the stopper, he guided the tip down into the drain hole. There was a thud in the bathtub. A terrifying spray of sparks billowed into the air, and Thompson vanished in the spray.

The sparks covered Manfred Kolakowski. The inventor's body seemed to lurch up through fire, and he threw his body over the lever. The lever jerked down and steel flooded into the machine.

"Come on, baby!" someone yelled.

The mold glowed and brightened, and the copper horn sounded a deep note. A spray of sparks flew from the mold. The crew ducked. Thompson was still lancing the drain hole. Sparks waved out of the bathtub, and they looked like nodding wheat.

"*Powder!*" came the voice of Thompson.

Kinsey began to push powder into the hot mold. Suddenly, Busse was next to Kinsey, pushing powder, too. The vice-president and the steelworker crouched in the glow, sparks racing around their legs.

Thompson jumped down from the bathtub, tossing his glowing lance away. "*Start!*" he shouted.

The mold shook up and down, faster and faster as the top of the machine oscillated to prevent molten steel from sticking inside the mold. Sparks sailed from the mold and bounced across the deck like Ping-Pong balls. A ribbon of steel moved down into the machine: the cast had begun. Busse pushed powder into the mold. Kolakowski twitched the lever. A roar came up from the crowd below the casting tower. They had seen steel begin to emerge from the machine.

Suddenly, the machine came to a halt, with a sound like *wah, wah, wah, wuuuh.*

"What happened?"

"It stopped!"

"Breakout! *Breakout!*"

There was a thud—a steam explosion under the deck. Smoke and flames burst up around the mold cover. Steel rained and spattered down through the casting tower. The roar from the crowd below turned into ugly yells when people saw the hot metal cascading through the tower.

Kolakowski yanked up the lever to shut off the flow into the machine. "Let's get the ladle out of here!" Millett

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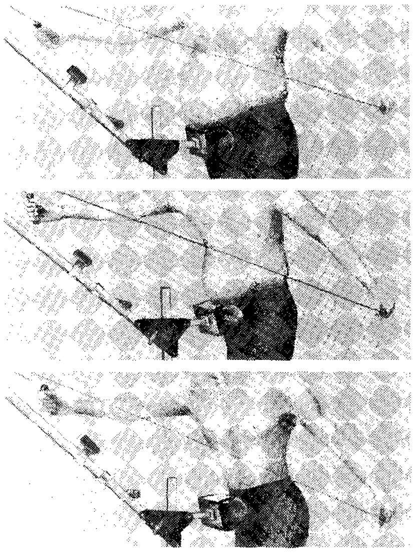

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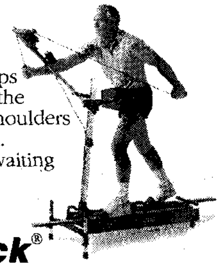

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exclaimed, and the crane snatched the ladle away from the casting deck.

Then the steelworkers abandoned their posts, tearing off their silvers and throwing their gloves into the air as they ran toward the exit stairs. They made it to the base of the casting tower in seventeen seconds.

There, amid a welter of machinery, a tongue of cherry-red steel poked from the machine, wreathed in clouds of steam. It was a thin slab, two inches thick and as wide as a sidewalk. It protruded six feet from the base of the casting tower.

"By God, the son of a bitch works!" a steelworker said. "All we got to do now is get the bugs out of it."

A lot of handshaking took place. "Thanks for your work, gents," Millett said to his men.

The casting crew wanted to try again—a fourth attempt. "Come on, Mark. How about it?"

"Nope, mates," he said.

"Hell, I'm disappointed," Kinsey said. "We made a piece of steel six feet long. I wanted to see a *slab* come out of that Tinkertoy."

"Yeah, but it's a world record in the Western Hemisphere," Owens remarked.

Kolakowski seemed disappointed. "It has been a long day," he said, pulling off his silver gloves. "A long day, and a long job, to get two metres of slab. But a lot of questions have been answered. We will cast again on Monday."

Keith Busse said to me, quietly, "Mark Millett learned a lot about leadership tonight. The men were begging him to go on. Do you remember General George Patton at the Battle of the Bulge, when Patton said something like, 'I can be there'? Mark got there. That's the lesson Mark learned tonight."

Busse jumped in his car and drove home as fast as he could, calling David Aycock, the president of Nucor, on his cellular telephone. He woke Aycock up, to tell him that Crawfordsville had made six feet of steel.

It was a long, mean summer. Weeks in August went by when Mark Millett would send a slab of steel through a tunnel furnace (to heat the slab evenly) and down the line to Rodney Mott, the manager of the hot mill—the downstream half of the compact-strip-production machine. Mott would drive the slab into the rolling mill, and four ten-thousand-horsepower Westinghouse electric motors would kick in, to roll the steel, and the immense draw would kill the electric power throughout the Crawfordsville Project. It happened again and again: a slab would hit the rolling mill and the lights would go out. Then the furnaces would die, and the casting machine would break out, steelworkers shouting, "Breakout! Breakout!" And the computers would crash, and metal would jam inside the rolling mill. Meanwhile, Nucor's customers began to place orders for steel. They began to call Nucor's salespeople, asking, "So do you think maybe you can send us a little steel?"

It began to dawn on everyone at the plant that to make a few sheets of D.M.—distressed material—is not the same thing as to make a million tons of prime steel and sell it for a profit. By early September, the Crawfordsville Project was losing a million dollars in cash every week, and distressed material was piling up in the downcoiler.

Each module, every subsystem, every mechanical device in the C.S.P. failed at one time or another, often simultaneously. On one occasion, a slab of steel went crooked inside the tunnel furnace and tore out one of the tunnel-furnace walls. Water systems inside the tunnel furnace overheated and exploded. The tunnel furnace boomed with steam explosions up and down its length, and finally the tunnel furnace had to be disassembled and rebuilt; the whole tunnel furnace was a tear-out. Meanwhile, the casting machine experienced breakout after breakout—"a breakout a day," Mark Millett said. Virtually every attempt to cast steel produced a couple of hundred feet of slab cut short by a nasty breakout. They'd be casting steel, everything going along fine, and suddenly flames would lick up around the deck, to shouts of "Terminate the cast! The sucker broke out!"

"Some of us even wondered if the process would work," Busse admitted.

On Wall Street that summer, the money managers had been bidding Nucor's stock higher and higher, fighting over a tight supply, but by September the company was still pouring a million dollars a week into the Crawfordsville Project, and the money managers began to get nervous. Wall Street began to realize that Nucor was going to report sharply lower earnings for the September quarter. The corporation's cash was circling a drain in Indiana.

Nucor's stock traded at sixty-seven dollars a share before Labor Day, and then it had a Labor Day sale. On September 15th, some large blocks of Nucor crossed the ticker tape at around sixty-one, the stock having lost six points in as many trading days. Iverson started getting telephone calls from nervous financial analysts.

All they had to do was pick up the telephone and call the chairman and C.E.O. "Hello, Ken Iverson. Yeah. I'm free right now. Sure." He tried to explain to the analysts that it was normal for a startup of a Nucor steel mill to take longer than he had anticipated. "In Crawfordsville, Indiana," he told them, "we have one of the largest research units in the world. It's a one-million-square-foot laboratory." He felt obliged to mention that the plant was still losing a million dollars a week.

The analysts called the money managers to report that Ken Iverson had said that the Indiana steel mill was a laboratory that was losing a million dollars a week. When the money managers heard the word "laboratory," it made them feel horrible. They called up their brokers and told them to sell the Nucor out of all the portfolios, quick.

During one week in September, Mark Millett made ten attempts to cast steel and had ten consecutive breakouts.

The following week, the C.S.P. produced its first prime coil of steel, a strip of hot-rolled steel without any serious blemishes.

One sunny morning in October, Ken Iverson sat in a chair in Keith Busse's office in the Crawfordsville Administration Building. The mill had not yet shipped a coil of steel to an outside customer. "I'm not worried," Iverson said. "I've been telling people I sleep like a baby—I wake up every hour and cry."

Busse sprawled on a chair, chewing a coffee-stirrer. "Did you hear this one, Ken? The U.S. Steel people called a huge meeting on the Lake Shore with their venders. This big shot of a vice-president got up and said that U.S. Steel would not tolerate it if the venders did business with Nucor for less money than with U.S. Steel."

"Where'd you hear that?"

"One of our venders. He was at the meeting. They're threatening their venders! If that ain't being scared to death of Nucor, I don't know what is."

"They shouldn't be scared of us. A million tons of steel is nothing."

A FEW minutes before seven o'clock on the evening of Wednesday, January 24, 1990, the casting crew brought a ladle over to the casting tower, filled a bathtub with molten steel, and prepared to cast, but they couldn't get the cast started. Mark Millett happened to be inside the pulpit of the casting tower at the time, along with a man named Dave Smith, the casting foreman on duty. Smith gave an order to terminate the cast. The crane operator, Mike Hinz, who was sitting inside a cab in the crane, near the roof of the melt shop, moved the crane toward the casting tower, to pick up the ladle and remove it—standard procedure when a cast is aborted. The ladle contained ninety tons of hot metal, at a temperature of 2900 degrees Fahrenheit.

At 7:05 P.M., Hinz lifted the ladle off the casting tower, carried it high and westward, toward a slagging area at the base of the tower, and started to lower it toward the ground—standard procedure. Five seconds after the ladle cleared the casting tower, there was a whining sound from the crane. Millett, standing near the control desk inside the pulpit, heard the sound and looked up. He saw that the crane cables had broken and unravelled. The ladle was falling to the ground. It was a huge object, fifteen feet high, filled nearly to the brim with liquid steel, and the bottom of it was forty feet off the floor. It seemed to pass the deck slowly. Five people were working on the floor below the ladle. The ladle vanished below the deck. Millett and Smith both dived under the control desk. There was a big, bright-yellow flash, and the lights went out.

Two hundred yards north of the casting tower, in an office at the hot mill, a maintenance manager named Robert Soden heard a boom, and then a second boom, much louder than the first. He sensed that something bad had happened at the casting tower. He ran outdoors. It was a black, moonless evening, under an overcast sky. There were no lights in the melt shop, and the building was a black shadow, as tall as Reims Cathedral. He saw a terrifying sight. He was looking through the melt shop. The building had become a transparent spiderweb. The north and south walls were blown out, and parts of the roof were blown away. The casting tower, toward the east end of the building, was a silhouette bathed in orange fire near the center of the spiderweb. The blowouts in the walls were sixty feet tall and more than a hundred and twenty feet wide. By his own subsequent account, Soden thought something like: Everyone in that building is dead.

The ladle hit the ground in a slagging area—a place where slag is dumped from ladles—and the molten steel inside the ladle lurched at impact, throwing steel everywhere in a chrysanthemum burst, blowing out the south wall of the melt shop. That was the first boom. Then the ladle tipped over against a retaining wall and dumped part of its contents on the ground, at the base of the casting tower. The steel splashed into a tunnel beneath the casting tower. The tunnel had an open roof along part of its length, and it may have contained water. The slagging ground, under the ladle, may have been wet. In any case, it seems that water was somewhere in the area. You can put water on steel, but you can't put steel on water.

Wherever the water was, it flashed to superheated steam. Steam, raised instantly to the temperature of molten steel, expands with a force that is a hundred thousand times greater than the pressure of the atmosphere. In other words, it produces a tremendous explosion. A fireball ballooned upward, throwing a fanburst of liquid steel mixed with chunks of scrap all the way to the roof of the building, blowing out the north wall and parts of the roof. A pause followed, because it takes a while for something to be hurled a hundred feet in the air and come down, and then molten steel and scrap metal came down over the casting tower, hitting the casting deck with great splats and clatters and backsplashes, landing on

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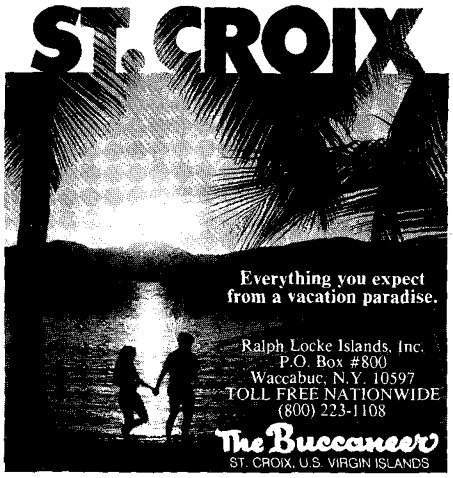

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wooden pallets, bags of powder, wastebaskets, storage lockers, and cardboard boxes; and the whole casting deck erupted in fires. Moments later, concrete in the casting deck began to explode under molten steel, throwing concrete shrapnel and liquid steel into the air again. Cans of cement exploded with thuds. There were four steelworkers standing on the deck. They ran for cover, and survived.

The spill and the explosion released a flash of infrared light, which filled the building with infrared radiation. The radiant heat inside the building rose to searing temperatures and then dropped quickly as the infrared light faded away. During a major steel spill, human skin can be blistered by black-body radiation reflecting off walls and ceilings as well as from the light coming directly from the metal.

Huddled beneath the control desk in the pulpit on the casting tower, Mark Millett and the casting foreman, Dave Smith, didn't really hear the explosion. To them it felt like a hurricane, and the metal rain came, and the deck caught fire. They crawled out from under the control desk and ran onto the deck. Smith was in charge of the casting tower. He was the pilot, with primary responsibility for the lives on the casting tower. He was twenty-nine years old, a tall, skinny, rather quiet person, with a narrow chin and a loose-limbed way of moving. He had worked for North Star Steel before he came to Nucor. At North Star, he had once seen an electric-arc furnace blow up. It was a chain of explosions that lasted for twenty minutes, during which everyone stood around outdoors watching the melt shop disintegrate. "I've been around Cape Horn a lot," as he once put it.

Smith and Millett dodged through steel fires and concrete explosions. They wanted to get to the ground, because there had been people working on the floor of the melt shop. Smith turned around and said to his crew, who had moved out from under cover, "Call 911," and then he raced down the west exit stairs, with Millett running after him. At the base of the tower, Smith came to a doorway that led out onto the floor of the melt shop.

A brilliant light was streaming through the doorway. The light and smoke hurt Smith's eyes. He couldn't see anything through the doorway. It was like looking into the door of a furnace. He burst into tears, crying "Charlie! Charlie!" He was thinking about a friend named Charlie Roarks, who he knew had been working on the floor. He lowered his dark glasses and went through the doorway into the light.

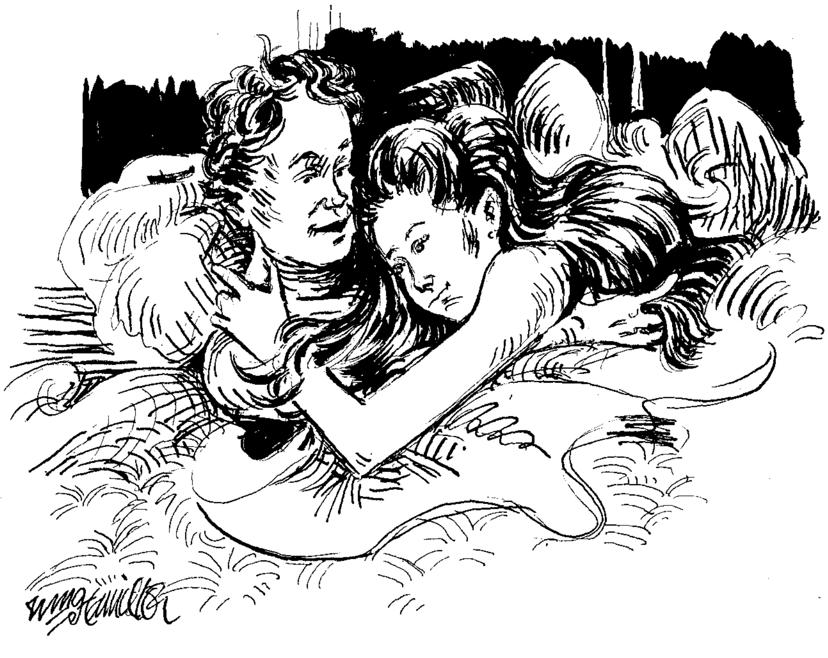
Through his dark glasses, Smith saw the ladle in front of him, tipped at an angle, golden-mouthed, dribbling. Steel fires were burning everywhere. A natural-gas fire raged from a burst pipe. The space was filled with toxic smoke. Smith was wearing his silvers, but the radiant heat was so terrible that it seemed to cut through the graphite-and-Kevlar fibres in his suit. He put a hand over his face and tried to breathe, running through the fires, almost blinded with smoke and tears, crying "Charlie!" He circled behind a row of empty ladles and looked there—"scared I'd find him curled up in a ball, just burned to death." His friend Charlie wasn't there. Nobody was there.

Mark Millett followed at Smith's heels. Millett was not wearing silvers, so for him the heat was all the more intense. He had never seen anything like this in his life. "The whole center aisle of the melt shop was covered in flames and molten steel," he said later. "It was a war zone." Millett covered his mouth with his hands and zig-zagged around metal blobs, looking for survivors. There was no one in the area.

Charlie Roarks—the man Smith was hunting for—had been standing on a small platform at the foot of the casting tower, where ladles are heated and ladle slidegates are repaired. He was not wearing silvers. When the ladle hit the ground, he tumbled down a flight of stairs and was caught in the steam explosion and the infrared flash, but he managed to get out of the building with only his hands and arms burned. Also standing on the platform was Patrick Major, a vender, a specialist from the North American Refractories Company, who took care of slidegates. Major was also not wearing silvers, and he was overwhelmed in the heat.

A maintenance man named Eugene Ruark had been standing closest to the ladle when it fell. Gene Ruark was standing with his back to the ladle, talking on a telephone near the spot where the ladle hit the ground. The ground shuddered, and he was pelleted across the back and shoulders by molten steel, which threw him to his knees. He was a Christian, and accepted the idea that God might have chosen this moment for him to die. But he didn't die. He got to his feet and turned and took three steps. Then came the second blast, when the steel apparently found the water, and it picked up Ruark and hurled him fifty feet down the length of the melt shop. He landed conscious. He got up and started running, and as he ran he looked overhead, where he knew the danger was coming from.

What Ruark saw over his head he would undoubtedly remember for the rest of his life. He saw yellow blobs of liquid steel of differ-



"I know this is going to sound completely crazy and off the wall—but do you, by any chance, know how to iron?"

ent sizes, some like golf balls, many as large as water balloons, falling from above, dropping from as high as the roof of the building—a downpour of steel, coming from perhaps a hundred feet in the air. The water balloons came down in slow motion. It took the metal four or five seconds to arc to the roof of the mill and come down. He knew that if he was hit by one water balloon it would kill him. The golf balls missed him, and the balloons splashed around him, and he dodged them all and made it to safety behind a piece of equipment. His shirt was on fire, so he took it off. The steel had burned his shoulders, but he had survived.

A woman was standing near a doorway that led outside. Her name will be given as Ellen Otway. She saw the ladle begin to fall, and ran outside. A wall blew apart behind her, and then she turned and ran back inside the melt shop to try to help, and she ran into the metal rain. Nothing hit her, the rain stopped, and she saw a mostly naked man, wearing only boots and gloves and scraps of burning clothes, running toward her, asking for help. It was Patrick Major, the man from North American.

Major had been splashed directly with molten steel. He had taken the infrared flash and had been enveloped in a cloud of ash-dry superheated steam. The steam was hotter than the ignition point of cloth. The steam and the light had burned his clothes off, left him naked, wearing only his boots and gloves. His hard hat was gone. Seventy per cent of his body was burned.

The woman led him out of the building. His skin was red, shiny, and black, and marked with powdery carbon crusts from splashes of hot metal. He felt little or no pain, as yet. He was deeply afraid. Once outdoors, they stood in the darkness for a moment, and the woman took off her jacket and put it over his shoulders.

Others arrived, and tried to calm Major. They removed a few bits of his charred clothing, and persuaded him to sit on the tailgate of a pickup truck. According to one report, when they tried to move Major his skin slipped off. According to another report, he looked as if he were wrapped in plastic.

Back inside, Millett said to Smith, "What about the crane operator?" Smith looked overhead. The crane was stopped. Smith climbed a ladder up the east wall of the melt shop until he reached a crane rail—a girder, eighteen inches wide, upon which a crane travels. He started to walk toward the crane. He had to walk a hundred feet along the rail, looking eighty-five feet down on both sides to the floor. Columns of toxic smoke from fires on the floor pooled near the roof. It was dark in the building, except for firelight. Smith arrived at the crane. "The blast had cracked a window in the crane," he said later. "So I started getting kind of scared. I didn't see any movement in the cab."

He moved along the top of the crane. "I thought, I'm going to climb down in there and find someone in there hurt real bad. I got my flashlight out and shined it in there. Then I heard him hollering."

Hinz, the crane operator, was the man who had once told me of his dream —that he was waiting for his retirement plan to hit six figures, so he could buy a motor home and retire. Steel had hit the cab, and some molten slag had come in through an open window. Hinz had dived under his chair. Then he had climbed out of the cab and was now sitting on a platform on the side of the crane with an injured shoulder and some burns, and suffering from shock and smoke inhalation.

Smith led Hinz along the crane and back to the crane rail. Now they had to get back to the ladder on the wall, along a hundred feet of rail, and Hinz was dizzy. Smith held Hinz tightly. He told Hinz to sit down on the rail if he felt faint. They began to move along the crane rail toward the ladder. If either man had lost his balance, they both would have pitched to their deaths. They reached the ladder, and Smith got Hinz down the ladder to the casting deck. Mark Millett, meanwhile, gave orders for all the employees in the melt shop to gather for a head count. Millett did two head counts. Everyone seemed accounted for.

Keith Busse had been at home when the melt shop blew up. He now drove through the north gate, where a guard told him, "Mr. Iverson's trying to get hold of you." Busse took a quick look around and called Iverson, in North Carolina. According to Iverson, Busse sounded "scared as hell." In Iverson's words, "Keith had never been through anything like that, and it was a terrible thing for a manager to go through, a

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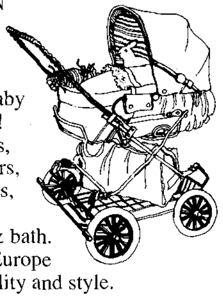

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test of a manager. At a time like that, you don't know which way to turn, and you are frightened. Your employees are frightened themselves, and what do you tell them?"

In Busse's words, "Until you see the walls of a steel mill blown off and part of the roof blown away, the power of hot metal doesn't hit you. You come face to face with hot metal."

If the ladle had fallen about five seconds earlier, it would have landed on the casting deck and drenched the casting tower with molten steel. It would have burned up the casting tower, and in that case, it is generally believed, no one on the casting tower would have survived, because no one would have had time to escape.

Inspectors from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, OSHA, came through the plant and sifted through twisted metal and broken crane cables. Some of the crane cables had fallen into the ladle of molten steel and had dissolved, and so crucial evidence was gone. It might have been possible to re-start steel production within a day or two—although the walls were blown out, the machinery was for the most part undamaged—but Busse didn't want to make steel. In any case, the OSHA people found several safety violations. They wanted certain areas of the melt shop to be left unrepaired while they studied the wreckage.

Busse shut down production and organized a series of meetings with employees. From Busse's point of view, the purpose of the meetings was to allow employees to voice their complaints and to offer ideas for ways to improve safety. "I pounded the pavement," he said later. "You start with a series of safety meetings. You don't have one safety meeting—that would be a brushoff. We also tried to demonstrate the safety of the mill to the employees and to present them with facts and figures that show they are working for a safe company." For Busse, the glory of the startup had been taken away, and the heady feeling of playing with gigantic toys had given way to a deepening awareness of the possibility of death inside a steel mill.

The employees from the local area were horrified by the accident. They expressed a great deal of fear during the meetings with Busse, and they pointedly asked him if the corporation cared about them. Crawfordsville had woken up to steel. Nucor employees who had come from other companies in the steel industry felt that a warning had been given to the inexperienced Nucor employees, and they also expressed the opinion that Busse appeared to be as shocked by the accident as the local people.

After a week of meetings, Busse restarted production. He vowed to make the melt shop the safest melt shop in the United States, and he announced a series of changes: double cables on the cranes, so that if one cable broke, the other would prevent a ladle from falling to the floor; collapsible escape ladders that could be thrown over the railing of the casting deck, to get people off the ship if it was burning; and a rule that all employees who were working in the aisle of the melt shop would have to go outdoors when a ladle was coming through. He built a catwalk running the length of the melt shop, so that employees could walk the length of the building without ever having to set foot on its floor.

Dave Smith said, "People in the steel industry kind of take these accidents as a fact of life. If you wanted to be completely safe, you wouldn't drive a car. The only way to prevent all accidents with steel is never to have a ladle full of steel."

"We're not making aspirin here," Dick Haltom told a newspaper reporter. "We're making steel."

Driven by the pressure of the startup, Busse and the other Nucor employees evidently had not paid enough attention to routine maintenance. In particular, OSHA requires all ladle cranes to be inspected monthly for safety, and also requires the company to keep records of the inspections. OSHA claims that Nucor did not inspect the cranes regularly and did not keep records. This would be a serious violation of safety codes. Busse says, "We had rules for maintenance, but in the thick of battle we didn't enforce the rules. If we didn't get to something, we'd say, 'We'll get to it next week.' "

The ladle fell into a slagging area—the best possible place for a ladle to fall. But there happened to be water where the steel could find it. OSHA charged Nucor with a knowing violation of safety for having allowed water to accumulate near the casting tower and in the slagging area. Nucor is contesting these charges. But it seems reasonable to conclude that the explosion could only have been caused by water flashing to superheated steam underneath liquid steel, throwing the steel into the air at a hundred thousand atmospheres of pressure, in a devastating blast.

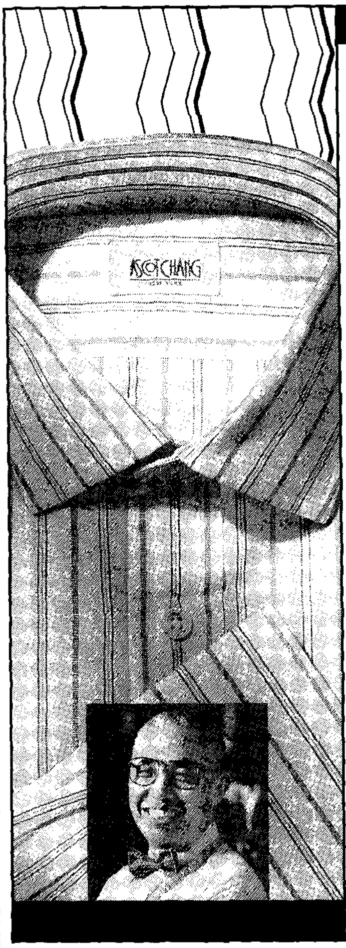
Patrick Major, burned over seventy per cent of his body, died three weeks after the accident. He was thirty-seven. One Nucor employee said, "Pat would have been better off if he had died inside the melt shop." Shortly afterward, a lawyer representing the Major family indicated that his clients would seek unspecified large damages from the Nucor Corporation and from other companies involved in the installation and inspection of the crane. The matter is now in negotiation among a number of insurance companies. One way or another, the Major family will receive a sum of money in exchange for the life of a man. In the Middle Ages, it was called *wergeld:* man-gold. Major had been a pleasant man with thinning sandy-brown hair—an expert on ladle slidegates, who worked hard and enjoyed a beer at the Scoreboard Lounge in Crawfordsville. He was survived by his wife and two children. Mark Millett attended the funeral with some other Nucor employees, in Valparaiso, Indiana, near the Lake Shore. The children wept inconsolably, and Millett drew many stares, some sympathetic, some bitter.

ON a fine cold day in April, 1990, three months after the accident, Ken Iverson was sitting at his desk at Nucor's headquarters, at the Cotswold Building, in Charlotte, North Carolina. "If you've never been in a steel accident, it's really a traumatic experience," he said, and his eyes widened. "Keith was magnificent. He handled it beautifully. Nobody so far has left the company, but there were people who were close to leaving. Keith took a lot of time with people and allowed everybody to have a voice."

He stood up and crossed his office and picked a metal ring off a shelf. He dropped the ring on his desk with a clatter. "Take a look at that," he said.

I held the ring in my hands. It was a piece of silvery-gray steel marked with the corporate logo of the Ford Motor Company.

"That's a bracket for a car-stereo speaker. That's cold-rolled steel from Crawfordsville," he said, sitting down. "We're selling steel to a parts maker



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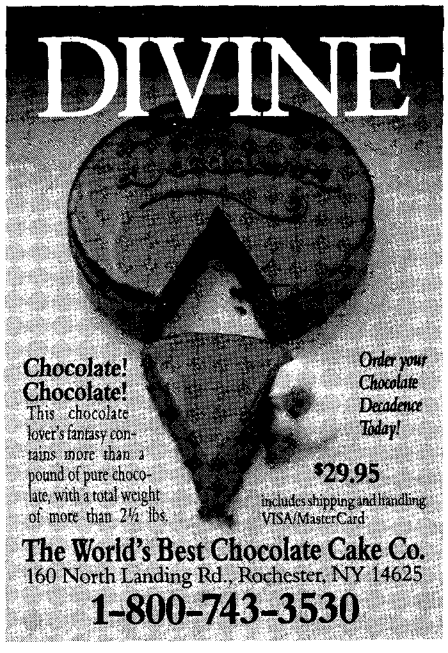

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who's selling these to Ford. I don't think the Ford Motor Company even knows that it's putting Nucor steel into Ford cars." He grinned. He crushed a cigarette in a dusty soapstone ashtray, stood up, reached behind his door for his jacket. We passed a starveling umbrella tree and a receptionist, and rode down the elevator. Iverson headed across the parking lot and slid behind the wheel of a custard-yellow Mercedes-Benz turbo-diesel. The car was in less than mint condition, with a greasy leather interior, and it smelled faintly of tobacco. He pulled into traffic beside a shopping center, keeping to the right lane and driving fast. "There is always a cost of market entry," he said. "We're selling at twenty dollars a ton lower than Big Steel's price, which is currently about three hundred and twenty-five dollars a ton. The Big Steel companies are making it difficult for us to make a market entry. If we make a successful entry—and I think we will—then, eventually, Big Steel will accept our presence in the market, and we'll get a better price."

COMPANIES are clouds, moving together in the general flow of the national economy. You think you see a shape, but the next time you look the cloud is different. The last time I looked at the Nucor Corporation, it was becoming a thunderhead. The national economy was in a recession, several large steel companies were losing money on their operations, but Nucor's Crawfordsville Project was a modest financial success. The mill was profitable—barely.

"We turned a profit in eleven months, and that's unheard of for the startup of a steel mill," Busse said. "Sleeping Beauty woke up after all."

The compact-strip-production machine was cranking out steel at a rate of eight hundred and fifty thousand tons a year, operating at eighty-five per cent of its hoped-for million-ton capacity. Now it looked as if the mill's capacity would eventually exceed a million tons a year. Busse believed that he might be able to goose Iverson's machine up to 1.3 million tons a year. Wall Street's engine runs on the emotion that comes with the gain of money or the loss thereof, and Nucor's stock was trading high, fast, and loose on the New York Stock Exchange. One day, it fell six and seven-eighths points; another day, it leaped six points. Last week, it was at seventy-four dollars a share. Samuel Siegel, Nucor's chief financial officer, estimated the capital cost of the Crawfordsville Project at $275 million dollars, and he claimed that it was a bull's-eye on his original estimate, after he had factored in Iverson's usual budgetary optimism.

Keith Busse punched some numbers on a calculator and declared that the compact-strip-production machine had most recently made hot-band steel with .66 hours of human labor per ton, and that figure included all administrative staff: two-thirds of a man-hour per ton. Iverson's machine had reached beyond the labor efficiency that Iverson had originally projected, which was one man-hour per ton. The Crawfordsville steel mill was several times as labor-efficient as the Japanese steel industry.

Busse was selling steel for as little as $280 a ton—fourteen cents a pound. For virtually all steel companies on earth, fourteen-cent sheet steel is the kiss of bankruptcy, the valley of the shadow of death. Busse was selling metal out of the dark valley and booking a profit on it, and he feared no recession. In fact, now that a recession had arrived, "Big Steel is painting the walls red with their blood while we are eking out a small profit," he said. "There's a big difference between a loss and a profit."

The Nucor metal suffered from brown spots. Some of it was distressed material—just as some Big Steel executives were alleged to have hoped. Busse hoped that he would soon be able to match the quality of the sheet steel coming out of the Lake Shore, and could consequently get a better price for Nucor steel.

The Koreans, the Germans, the Belgians, the Mexicans, the Canadians, and the Brazilians, none of whom were collaborating with Nucor but all of whom were exporting steel to the United States, were scared, according to Iverson. "There is no question that the foreigners are afraid of us," he said. In Iverson's opinion, the foreigners were afraid that if Nucor kept expanding its business, and building C.S.P.s, Nucor might hurt their export markets in America. The foreign steel producers were worried that they might lose a piece of the five Great Pyramids of solid steel that Americans consume every year—at least, so went the Nucor braggadocio.

While the Nucor Corporation made

more and more steel, differing views on the subject of Nucor continued to be heard. A senior vice-president at Bethlehem Steel, Roger P. Penny, was quoted in the *Times* as saying, "To make their product fully competitive in the marketplace will surely take five to ten years."

The remark irritated Busse. "He's never seen Crawfordsville," he said. "He's never stumbled over this technology in his life. What we're doing in Crawfordsville is like taking a Conestoga wagon for the first time across the plains."

DAVE THOMPSON, a hot-metal man of the second generation, stands on the casting deck, suiting up for a cast. He wraps his silver booties around his legs. He fastens his silver coat. His silvers are filthy, greasy, eroded by the violence of the startup. Thompson carries a flashlight in his hip pocket, for peering into lightless nooks inside the casting machine. A siren wails through the melt shop: a ladle of steel is heading for the casting tower. The ladle arrives at the deck and is placed on a ladle car, and it creaks on rails toward the copper mouth. He turns and gazes up at the ladle, and he lowers his face shield, preparing for the duel. A drumroll splits the air—an arc furnace melting at full power.

Over at the furnace deck is Keith Busse. He can often be found there. He takes a look around to see that the area is healthy, safe, and clean, he says. ("Is this smoke being pulled away properly?") After that, inevitably, his eyes turn toward the door in the side of the furnace which leads to another universe, and he lowers his dark glasses. "I guess there's something so God-damned exciting about living on the edge. I guess I'm a little awestruck by the power and the energy that's sitting there, contained in that flat bath. When I see those electrodes popping the metal, I think about what kind of awesome energy is being driven into a square metre of metal. Snap, crackle, pop, and bang. I love to hear arc furnaces roar. In the business world, you live where the excitement is. I think the steel business is the most exciting business I've ever seen in my life. I guess I'm a hot-metal man at heart."

At the casting tower, Manfred Kolakowski paces the deck. "I have not been back to Germany since I arrived here," he says. Dave Thompson says, "Cast mode!" Hot-metal men from Crawfordsville move quickly over the deck, setting up temperature probes, throwing levers, dumping powder on top of the machine beside the mold.

"Open slidegate!" Thompson says.

The ladle opens, but nothing comes through. The slidegate is plugged with a skull. Thompson takes up an oxygen lance and drives it up into the monster. He yanks out the lance, there's a flash, and steel booms into the tundish, in a brilliant pour. Thompson turns away from the heat without a word. His men know what to do. The tundish—the bathtub—fills with liquid steel. It rushes into the Kolakowski mold, which shivers around the nozzle in a sexual-industrial climax, and water jets roar inside the machine.

A steelworker calls to Thompson, "We're casting at a hundred and seventy inches a minute!"

Thompson studies a control panel. "I've got seventy tons of steel in the ladle," he calls back. "Slow it down a little. The steel's about to blow us out of here."

The slab emerges from the base of the casting tower, a lengthening ribbon of pasta, and a shearing machine cuts it when it's a hundred and fifty feet long. It rides slowly through the tunnel furnace, being heated to a golden glow, heading for the mill stands. At the pulpit of the hot mill, a foreman watching symbols move across a colored screen mutters, "Yeah. Here it comes. Here it is. Ready?"

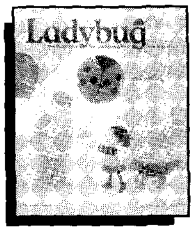
An operator nods, his fingers poised over joysticks.

The slab passes through a water spray with great puffs of steam, and drives into the mill stands: *ba-boom, ba-boom, ba-boom, ba-boom*—four thunderclaps, from the mill stands—as the steel is squeezed and elongated. It sounds like a lightning storm.

Now three thousand feet long and a tenth of an inch thick and still glowing, the former junk of the Rust Belt tails out of the last mill stand and hurries through water jets, darkening to gunmetal blue as it cools. As the tail of the strip rumbles into the downcoiler, a final *ba-boom* echoes through the mill. A coil of steel pops off a mandrel and moves slowly up the ramp to the end of the line.

—RICHARD PRESTON

(This is the second part of a two-part article.)



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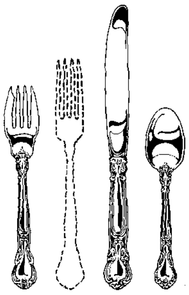

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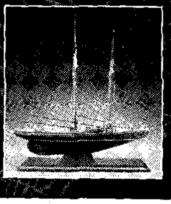

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IN FASHION

The Life of the Party

Susanne Bartsch's worries are the worries of any anxious hostess: that nobody will show up for the night she organizes on the last Thursday of every month at the Copacabana, the club on East Sixtieth Street; that the people who do come will just stand around with drinks in their hands, looking bored; that the spontaneous combustion that makes for a successful party will never take place. "I'm sorry I have to charge you," she tells her friends, who number in the hundreds, "but you understand." She really is, and they do—after all, she has to make a living. Even so, she manages to keep the price at the door to ten dollars, which is fairly reasonable when you consider what you're getting: two dance floors, musclemen, voguers, drag queens, to say nothing of Bartsch herself, presiding over events in some gala showgirl concoction that pushes up her breasts and cinches in her waist, and wearing her trademark platform shoes, false eyelashes, and, often, a wig that makes no attempt to pass itself off as human hair. The truth is she has no cause for concern. The people who turn out for her nights at the Copa come determined to let loose for the space of a few hours, all got up—a large percentage of them in drag—in outfits they've been working on for weeks. Many of them look like refugees from a Fellini movie. Sooner or later, the place is so packed that the Fire Department arrives. Still, Bartsch gets on the phone the next day and calls her friends to ask if they had a good time.

Dubbed "the Queen of the Night," Bartsch is the first to admit that her empire isn't what it used to be, before she came to power, and that it's AIDS that has put a damper on the fun. Even so, although the prospect of spending the night with a stranger is now fraught with all kinds of qualifications, not everyone is staying home alone, and for many of those who do go out, the erotic adventures seem these days to be not so much sexual as sartorial. Despite the Dionysian mayhem, Bartsch's parties are closer in spirit to Disneyland than to bathhouse orgies. Louis Canales, a publicity agent and club owner who recently persuaded Bartsch to go to Miami and organize a monthly night there, characterizes the atmosphere as one of "naïve decadence." Marc Jacobs, the designer for Perry Ellis and a friend of Bartsch's, marvels at her seemingly indelible innocence. "She can talk about genitalia and having sex with sailors," he says, "and it doesn't seem dirty somehow."

A vixen with the heart of a Girl Scout, Bartsch is beloved by her friends, all of whom, either consciously or inadvertently, do impersonations of her Swiss-German accent, with its interchanged "v"s and "w"s, superimposed on a steady stream of Cockney turns of phrase. Her conversation is a constant source of entertainment. Nouns can become superlative adjectives, as in "a genius hairdo," or "That outfit is showtime!" Mostly because she can't remember people's names but also partly as a term of endearment, she calls everybody, regardless of sex or sexual preference, "girlfriend," the way someone of an older generation might call everybody "dear."

In January, a week before the club night in Miami, the scene in Bartsch's apartment, in the Chelsea Hotel, is one of happy, if way-out, domesticity. In the living room, painted an intense shade of pink, with fat pink and green swirls around a purple sunburst at the center of the ceiling, a hammer and screwdrivers lie scattered next to the fireplace, where her husband has been working, renovating the apartment. Susanne's Rolodexes are lined up on the table, by the phone. In the middle of the floor sits the vacuum cleaner. "Swiss foreplay," she explains.

A slender woman with long, dark, curly hair and bangs that obscure a lack of eyebrows, and with a pointy high-bridged nose and a mouth stained a medium red, Bartsch looks no more than two-thirds her age, which is close to forty. Because she has spent the afternoon calling on potential sponsors for the Love Ball, a benefit she is organizing for AIDS, she is wearing what she jokingly calls her "natural look": a Betsey Johnson jersey zip-front jacket, miniskirt, and leggings, all in a bright-colored print featuring the Statue of Liberty, roses, and hearts wrapped in banners emblazoned "Mom"; black Nike sneakers with two-inch black rubber platforms; and a duckbill cap covered with bright-colored sequins the size of Necco wafers. Her husband, Ty Bassett, who has pale-blue eyes and close-cut blond hair, looks barely twenty-three, which he is. They were married one afternoon three years ago, on a break from decorating a club called Bentley's, on East Fortieth Street, where Bartsch organized a weekly night; they took a cab down to City Hall with their friend Kenny, who works the door at Bartsch's clubs, for a witness. He was wearing a T-shirt that said "Kiss Me" on the front and "Fuck Me" on the back. The bride wore jeans. The

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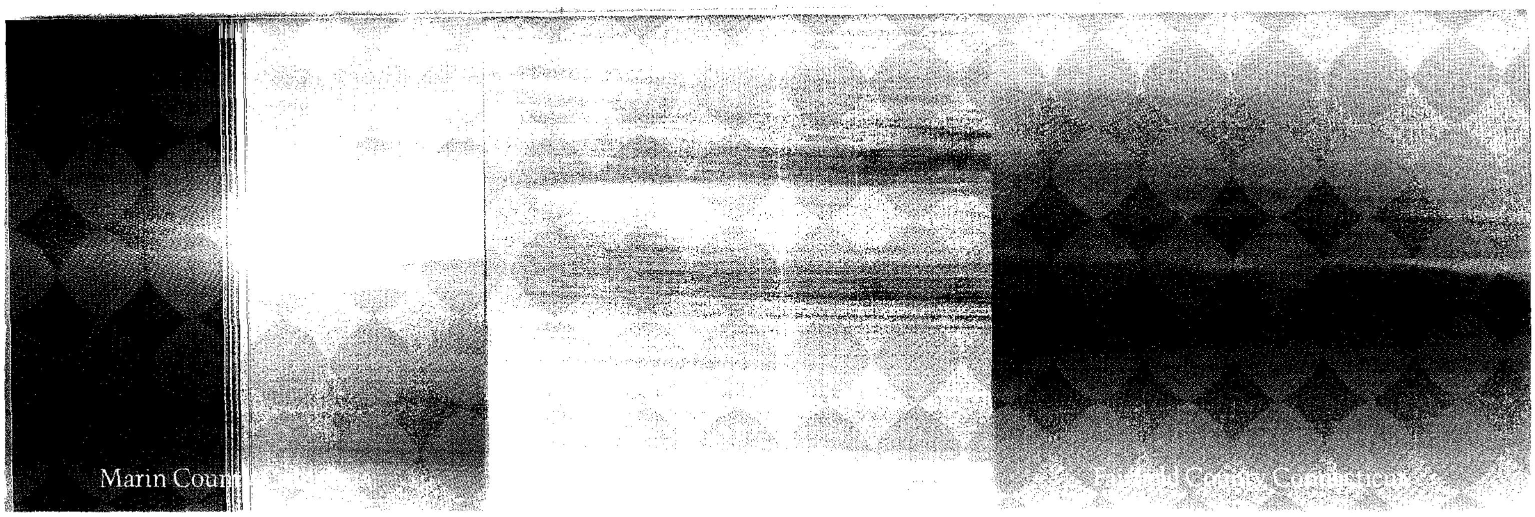

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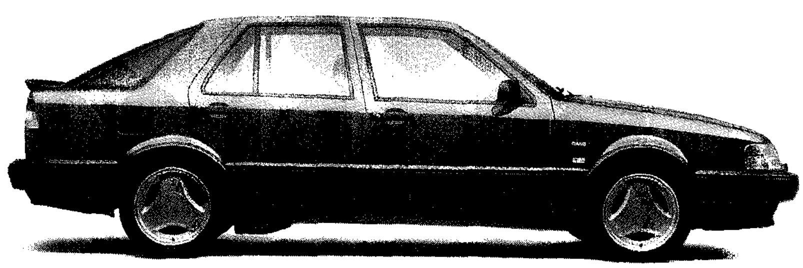

wedding rings, bought on Orchard Street, are gold B-boy rings that spread across two fingers: his says "I ♡ SB," hers "I ♡ TY." It seems, however, that Susanne has lost her ring. "Ty says it's an omen," she says. "I say rubbish, it's just a piece of jewelry."

If there's a theme that runs through the various jobs Bartsch has held, it is perhaps a fascination with the way people present themselves—with clothes and the part they play in people's imaginations. But this was never a conscious preoccupation, and it's discernible only in retrospect. Bartsch was simply following her instincts.

She arrived in New York nine years ago, by way of London, where she had gone in 1967 to get out of Switzerland. Born and brought up in Bern, she comes from good, solid mountain stock—her parents were, by her own description, "the kind of people who went to school on skis." Her father was a flooring contractor. "Tiles and winyls," she says. "And my mother was a kept woman—she was at home doing the children." A few months before her sixteenth birthday, Susanne escaped to London, ostensibly to learn English. Before long, feeling restless, she ran out on her host family and, her allowance having been cut off and her student visa revoked, found herself slicing Emmenthal cheese at the Swiss Center. Eventually, she took up with a man who had a shop in the Fulham Road called Universal Witness, selling up-to-the-minute clothes. Gene Krell, who then owned a store in London called Granny Takes a Trip and knew Bartsch there, says that in those days everybody went out every night. "You would get your hair cut at Sweeney Todd's, you'd buy your clothes at Granny's or Emmerton & Lambert or Mr. Freedom, and you would go down to clubs like Speakeasy or the Revolution. What was the point of looking fabulous, being all dressed up, and having no place to go?"

One day, while Bartsch was minding the store for her boyfriend, knitting at the cash register, along came a woman who wanted to order a sweater like the one she was making. Bartsch quoted her the audacious price of three hundred pounds. "And she says fine. And I said, 'O.K. Well! Size?' " So began Bartsch's first commercial venture—designing sweaters that were knitted by women in Brixton and bought by Led Zeppelin and other rock groups. On a trip to Italy, she fell in love, and, spending all the money she'd earned, stayed six months—long enough for the business to collapse and her boyfriend to call it quits. In retrospect, however, she considers him an important influence on her life. "I was very young," she says, "and had I gone to the wrong people I could have ended up on the straight side."

Bartsch rattled around London, working as a hairdresser's receptionist, running an antique-clothing stand in the Chelsea Market, eventually dealing in old jewelry and, she says, "bric-a-brac." In 1981, she came to New York to visit an English painter living in the apartment that is now hers ("I did all right there, didn't I?" she says), and decided to stay. She recalls, "He used to tell me, 'You shouldn't be selling dead people's goods. You're very creative—you should make things and deal in what's happening now.' I said to myself, 'Why don't I import what I miss?' Which at that time was that ever-changing London fashion scene—one week it was the New Romantics, the next week something else. You just couldn't believe how different people looked from one week to the next, what fabulous statements they made. There was nothing like that here—here it was very straightforward. So I looked around: SoHo would be the place for me. And I found this little place down on Thompson Street, which was affordable, the right size, the landlord was gorgeous—everything seemed right. So I went back to London, and I asked all these people like Body Map, Stephen Jones, Andrew Logan, would they be interested? And they all said, 'Yeah, great.' Most of them were still at school, and they were happy to knock out a few tops."

The shop, called simply Susanne Bartsch, created such interest in these designers that it was soon in danger of being crowded out of business. "Before I knew it," Bartsch says, "all these stores wanted to buy this stuff, and they all were going to England—Macy's and Bloomingdale's and Barneys—and I said, 'My God, I'm going to go under, I can't compete with that.' And then the competition angle and all that got me thinking, and I said, 'I know what to do—represent the people. If I represent them, I'm happy if the whole world sells them, because then I'm in, I'll make a little money from it.' "

Bartsch rounded up twenty English designers to take part in a show called "New London in New York," which she produced, first at the Roxy, in the spring of 1983, and in successive seasons at the Limelight. In the fall of 1984, she took her show to Tokyo, where it played for three days straight. Marc Jacobs, who was then working as a salesman at Charivari, says that Bartsch's English shows reminded him of the haute couture in a way—that although the attitude was, of course, completely different, these were clothes made for a very few people and for the sake of having a show. "I remember Leigh Bowery's segment of this one particular show," he says. "All these people came out onstage exposing their rear ends, and there were holes cut in all the shirts so the girls' tits stuck out. I thought that the idea of anyone buying these clothes made no sense whatsoever, because these were clothes for a very specific scene, and unless you were part of that scene you wouldn't wear them—they were too weird. Some lady from Long Island wearing a Leigh Bowery shirt just wouldn't make any sense—these clothes only made sense within their context. It was a for-us mentality. The thing about Susanne is it really doesn't matter who you are, no one is excluded from participating. So the idea of the clothes being for 'us'—well, 'us' is whoever wants to be 'us.' "

In the fall of 1984, having found a new store, on West Broadway, and someone to finance it, Bartsch made up her mind to put her energies back into retailing. On her way to work one day, she walked out the front door of the Chelsea Hotel and saw a construction site for a night club. "And I thought, Oh, wow, a club downstairs!" she says. "I should do a night here as a way of promoting the shop—people can wear what they buy and come as special guests. But the guy who was building the club hadn't got a license for drinks, and I said, 'I can't do it, you know—I need drinking, it's important.' "

Meanwhile, the shop was in a bad way. Halfway through the construction, her business partner had pulled out. Bartsch had seen things through by herself for a while, never having enough money to go around. Other backers came to her rescue. As time went on, however, it was clear that their notion of what the shop was about was not hers. Miserable, aware that the battle was a losing one, she fought for her convictions until finally, one day in June, she walked out, taking nothing but her bottle of Shalimar. By quitting, she had broken her contract, and so she came away with no money. The phone rang: it was the night-club owner, who by this time had his liquor license, asking if Bartsch would like to do a night. "Yes, desperate," she said.

The club was called the Savage, and what started as a lark, on a Tuesday night in August of 1987, soon turned into a weekly tradition. John Badum, a vice-president of the sportswear company Go Silk and a friend of Bartsch's, says that the Savage was a departure from what most clubs had been—that it marked the start in New York of a trend that was already under way in London, where everyone would converge on a specific night "at a club that was otherwise totally naff." He calls the Savage's predecessors, clubs like Studio 54, Area, the Palladium, "superclubs put together by big investment groups—they wanted to be *the* hot spot in town every night." When Bartsch brought people to the Savage, it was to some place they had never heard of. At Studio 54, with its sod installed around the dance floor for a single night, at Area, with its animals and window displays, at the Palladium, with its wall of video monitors, the décor was part of the show. The Savage was a club completely devoid of décor; the experience consisted of the people and the music. It was, in short, a club that could move around, could convene and adjourn at will. Badum calls it "the born-in-the-wagon-of-a-travelling-show disco event."

When, several months later, Bartsch moved her weekly night to Bentley's, it was because she wanted a club with two dance floors—one for house music, one for disco. "And there I said, 'What can I add?' " she recalls. "I found these strippers who were brilliant, and, you know, they're always playing these sleazy clubs with drooling old men for an audience. I wanted to bring this stripping into a trendy environment—somewhere it wasn't about having a wank, excuse me." It was at Bentley's, in the beginning of 1988, that Bartsch started to add bodybuilders and drag queens, as go-go dancers, to the mix. Bartsch says that if she can be credited with some original contribution to night life in New York, it's that she took all these people out of their various corners—the drag queens out of the gay bars, the musclemen out of the gyms, the strippers out of the sex joints—and brought them into her club. With the drag queens, the standard for dressing up was raised even higher. "The night club was geared to being able to feature looks," Bartsch says. "I wanted people to come out there and show off their drag. And when I say 'drag' I don't mean that a woman has to turn into a man, or vice versa. I mean, get your goods out of the closet, you know? In England, it's slang for dressing up." By the time Bartsch's bandwagon pulled into the Copacabana, in July of 1988, a good percentage of the customers were turning out in drag as well—the show was no longer confined to the stage.

THE setup at the Copa is the same as it was at Bentley's: upstairs, a dark room throbbing to the beat of house music; downstairs, flashing colored lights and disco music. Bartsch says that she encourages people to dress up and "make a statement with themselves." Planning what to wear, shopping, getting ready all put a person in the right frame of mind for having a good time. "I mean, if you don't dress it's fine with me, too," she says. "It's not, like, a must. But I think it's an important ingredient of energy and successful atmosphere." Marc Jacobs, who has never missed a Copa night, thinks that there's essentially no difference between a drag queen getting dressed to go there and a socialite putting on her haute-couture gown for a charity ball; both are going to lengths that designate the evening as special, somehow—that invest it with a certain amount of expectation.

John Badum's guidelines for dressing for Bartsch's events are to break every rule and "go whole hog—and always more makeup." Badum says, "Getting dressed, you think, Oh, God, I feel so ridiculous putting this stuff on all alone at home. But then you get to the club, and everyone else is so over the top that you wish you'd done more. If you don't want to make an effort, go to another boring club, or stay home and watch television. But to be involved in any of Susanne's events is to have a little something extra demanded of you, and when you meet the demand I really think you have a better time for it."

There is nothing prurient or sentimental in Bartsch's interest in transvestites. She admires them for their ingenuity, applauds their fantasies, appreciates their outlook—their ability to laugh at themselves, to live for the moment. The fact that drag really works only one way—that a woman dressed as a man isn't as fascinating or as funny as a man dressed as a woman—has not escaped her attention. "It's the makeup that does it," she says. "And also the heels." Besides, she remarks, women today are already halfway there—wearing pants, flat shoes, little or no makeup. Jacobs thinks that a woman dressed as Cary Grant just isn't as interesting visually as a man dressed as Marilyn Monroe. "Glamour for a man runs a lot deeper than the surface," he explains, "whereas glamour for a woman in most people's minds is totally superficial."

Nearly everyone, when talking about Bartsch's parties, praises "the energy," describing it as "pure" and "positive," in contrast to the negative or druggy atmosphere of so many other clubs. Ronnie Cooke, a friend of Bartsch's who was for eight and a half years the fashion director of *Details*, says that she was "the first one to make it O.K. to have fun in New York." Before she ushered in a new era, night life here operated according to the same subtle distinctions that regulate life in New York by day: who you are, how much money you make, what you do for a living, who your father was. At clubs like Nell's and, before that, at Studio 54, status was a big part of the package. Club owners then "cast" their clubs the way directors cast a movie, with the audition at the door. Admission was an accomplishment on which the people inside could congratulate themselves; they felt special, chosen, superior to all those poor, shivering hopefuls lined up outside behind the ropes.

The snap judgments on which a club's exclusivity used to be based often came down to matters of fashion. Gene Krell, who now works the door for Bartsch's club nights, was born and brought up in Brooklyn; he recalls working the door at Xenon, where the management wanted him to turn away his own brother because he was wearing an open-collared shirt with a gold chain. At Studio 54, the door policy was mostly concerned with keeping out the "Saturday Night Fever," John Travolta types. A lot of clubs disqualified anyone wearing acid-washed jeans. Krell says that at a club where he worked the door back in the mid-sixties men wearing hats didn't get in—an attempt to screen out the pimps. In those days, the enemy was easier to identify. Now, he says, the only surefire way to get turned away is "to be smug and tell the person at the door, 'I'm a friend of Jean Paul Gaultier.' "

The consensus is that Bartsch somehow manages to cross boundaries, to break down the barriers that divide New York into dozens of social ghettos. Uptown types, downtown types, East Siders, West Siders, movie stars, models, businessmen, transvestites—they're all there. One night, she introduced John Badum, who had come as Elizabeth Taylor, to Malcolm Forbes. Bartsch's standards are egalitarian, democratic. Krell says that to the extent that there's a formula to her success it's that she brought together the various factions that exist in New York. "She capitalized on the contrasts," he says.

Celebrity is completely lost on Bartsch in most cases. "I'm So-and-So," some Hollywood actor will tell her, waiting for the door to swing open at the drop of his household name. "I don't care who you are," she replies. "Come on in and have a good time." If, however, a drag queen approaches her and introduces herself as Marlene Dietrich, Bartsch will say something on the order of "I'm glad to meet you, Marlene." Marc Jacobs compares Bartsch to party promoters like Nikki Haskell and Carmen d'Alessio, who presided over New York night life in the late seventies and early eighties and filled the clubs with Eurotrash. "They were so phony, running around with people with fake titles," he says. "If Susanne is running around with some drag queen with a fake title, it's *deliberately* fake, not trying to be something that it's not."

Occasionally, a friend will take her aside and point out the rich and the famous making their way through the crush at the door. "Good," she says. "Then they can afford to pay." Though Bartsch's nights have for some time now been her main means of support, the money always seems incidental. "You see, I want to do things people can afford, that don't cut a hole in their pockets," she explains. Beyond a certain price, she says, people have to think twice about coming, and then the whole prospect becomes more serious, and you attract a different crowd.

The one exception to Bartsch's admission policy is the Love Ball, the benefit for the Design Industries Foundation for AIDS that she masterminded two years ago, and its sequel, which she is planning now, to take place on May 22nd, at Roseland. Moved to action in 1988 by the news that several friends were sick, she organized an evening modelled on the house balls popular in Harlem: rigorously stylized sendups of fashion shows, in which various teams, or "houses," competed in several dance styles, including one called voguing—a sequence of freeze-frame moves based on the highly contrived poses found in old fashion photographs. She persuaded corporations to sponsor the event. People came from all corners of society and paid up to five hundred dollars for their tickets. In the end, the party went down in history as one of the best New York had ever seen and netted over four hundred thousand dollars for the cause. Bartsch calls it "the best thing I've ever done."

Her parties have by this time attracted a good many imitators—various entrepreneurs who have tried, unsuccessfully, to copy her formula. Bartsch has nothing against them. She says she thinks they fail because they're doing it "for the sake of promoting themselves and making a wage, and there just isn't the same flair as if it's something from your heart, you know?"

THE hotels lined up along Ocean Drive in Miami Beach are interrupted by an occasional convenience store in need of a new paint job or by a run-down deli selling pizza by the slice. On the inland side are low, pastel stucco apartment buildings with louvered windows, set back from the street. On Weber Beach, in front of the Waldorf, nicknamed after the Calvin Klein Obsession ads that Bruce Weber shot there, young men and women with well-oiled, muscular bodies sunbathe, hoping to get discovered. Up and down Lincoln Avenue, on the sidewalk in front of the souvenir shops and cut-rate clothing stores, the language buzzing through the air is Spanish.

South Beach, as this whole area is called, is what's known as a "transitional" or "up-and-coming" neighborhood, and it's following the usual trajectory. Ten years ago, this was primarily a ghetto for two populations living side by side and ignoring each other: for elderly Jewish people living in furnished rooms—people who on their Social Security and their small pensions couldn't afford to move to the condos in Broward—and for the residue of the 1980 Mariel boatlift. The crime rate ran high. Louis Canales remembers that six years ago, when he was a photographer's rep in New York and started commuting to Miami, he would run red lights on Washington Avenue if there was a gang standing on a street corner. Then the neighborhood started to turn around, as preservationists came to the defense of the outstanding tropical Art Deco architecture that fills the landscape, and as photographers and art directors began to discover that Miami has, as Canales puts it, "perfect light three hundred days a year." New York modelling agencies like Zoli, Click, Ford, and Wilhelmina opened branch offices there, and now you can find, by Canales' estimate, some twenty-four hundred professionally attractive people in a ten-block stretch—people who frequent the new restaurants, serving grilled vegetables, and the gay bars that have sprung up in the area. Local artists have taken space in its commercial buildings. Riding the crest of the trend are the New Yorkers who have bought houses or apartments in Miami as a wintertime alternative to Southampton or Fire Island. A changing parade of tan Europeans passes through, lingering in the late afternoon at the sidewalk tables of the Time Café.

In 1986, when Canales, who is Cuban-American and grew up in New York, moved to Miami Beach, he found a city so socially segregated that not only, for example, would Cubans refuse to speak to Puerto Ricans, but upper-class Cubans from Coral Gables would have nothing to do with blue-collar Cubans from Hialeah. Canales, an affable man in his forties, who dresses entirely in black, has a vision, though he's too modest to call it that: he wants to "build bridges" across these lines and get everybody talking to everybody else. "Not that I think that I'm a knight on a white horse," he says, "but if I'm going to live here I want to make things happen." At first, trusting in the universal language of music and art, he tried producing cultural events, and lost a lot of money doing it. "But after being here and going out every night I realized that Miami is a party town," he says, "and, as pathetic as it may seem, the agora of Miami is going to be the dance floor."

Canales and his wife, Jan, managed the Miami Film Festival. They were instrumental in starting a local magazine, modelled on *Interview* and called *Post Mortem*. They opened a private club, called Semper's, in South Beach. For a while, Canales organized a weekly party that moved from place to place, drawing people from Coral Gables, from Turnberry, from Coconut Grove: he would leave the particulars on his answering machine—a tactic he describes as "egalitarian but élitist." Anyone could get the number, which was listed in the directory, but you had to know enough to call.

It was last fall that Canales persuaded Bartsch to come to Miami and do a monthly party along the lines of her nights at the Copa. "Miami needed an infusion of Susanne—her point of view, her sense of fun," he says. He introduced her to the owners of a club called Warsaw, on Ocean Drive. For the first party, in November, there was no charge at the door—a gesture that Bartsch considered an investment. For the second, she charged five dollars. This time, she's raising the price to seven to help cover the expenses—plane tickets, taxis, hotel rooms for two d.j.s and nine drag queens. "I keep them there for three days, so they don't get worn out," she says. "I could send them overnight, but I think that's a bit mean, and I want them to be in good spirits."

On a Thursday afternoon in January, Bartsch and her husband are installed at 100 Lincoln Road, a crescent-shaped high-rise residence hotel that is set roughly perpendicular to the shore, so that its balconies look straight down the beach. The hotel's elderly permanent residents are by now accustomed to a procession of exotic characters through their midst once a month. "So!" one woman, with a poodle on a leash, says to another, carrying a bag of groceries, as they stand waiting for the elevators. "I hear Susanne Bartsch is back in town."

Bartsch looks after her charges, making their reservations, registering their complaints. "Mother Teresa in a glitter G-string," John Badum calls her. That afternoon, there had been an altercation at the hotel pool involving Alexis del Lago, a drag queen in her late forties who has come out of retirement in San Juan to work Bartsch's party. To swim in the pool is free; to sit on one of the chaise longues is a dollar. Alexis is indignant that she had to pay to sunbathe, and she explains to Bartsch that, being a diva, she felt justified in pitching a fit. "A diva wouldn't make a fuss about a dollar," Bartsch tells her. "I'll reimburse you."

Thursday night, Bartsch and her husband go out to dinner with Canales, his wife, and Marc Jacobs and his friend Scott Fritz, who have flown in for the party. The conversation turns to drag bars in Tokyo, where Jacobs reports having seen a sumo wrestler in fish-net stockings who, in a variation on the old karate cliché, puts a piece of wood on two supports and chops it in half with his penis.

Bartsch recommends a Thai restaurant in Paris where, after the dinner is served, a curtain is drawn across the entrance to the kitchen, and the waiters and cooks change into drag. But, for the most part, she says, the drag queens in Europe "want to *be* women—they want to be real."

Jacobs says, "The ones in Japan aren't doing the more glamorous side of it—they're lip-synching to Madonna or Paula Abdul and wearing really trashy lingerie, but not, like, *old* trashy, and there isn't humor in it. Somehow, it's too serious. Also, a lot of them are heroin addicts, and they're really high on stage, and you know that they're doing these shows to pay for their operations or their junk." It is agreed all around that the best drag queens are right here in America.

"For sure," Bartsch says. "Better than anywhere." She has been trying to persuade Ty to go to the party tomorrow night in drag. He doesn't seem too keen.

FRIDAY afternoon, Bartsch summons the members of her crew to the club at one to help her decorate. But the day is bright, and the warm air has slowed

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everyone's pace. At one-thirty, I step into Warsaw's cavernous darkness—black walls, black ceiling, black bar—and find Susanne cutting crêpe-paper streamers, Ty trying to figure out how the machine that blows up the balloons works, and a handful of local guys setting up the lights. Only Mme. Ekathrina Sobechanskaya, otherwise known as Madame, has been by. The founder and director (as Larry Ree) and prima ballerina of the Trockadero Gloxinia Ballet Company, a drag-ballet company based in New York, she stayed long enough to complain about the gels, announced that she was not about to waste her time waiting for "all these queens," and left. One by one, in good time, the others drift in.

Alan Mace, the d.j., who has been with Bartsch since Bentley's, arrives. He says that for these parties in Miami he plays "the latest, most up-to-date New York sound, mostly house music," but that tonight he'll be sharing the booth with Johnny Dynell, another New York d.j., and that they'll mix in some old disco as well. "I don't have a serious attitude about the music," he explains. "I just try to keep the energy up. My emphasis is for everybody to have a good time, so they can drop their worries from the outside world." Mace also d.j.s at the Limelight on Saturday nights. "That's a more conservative, straight crowd, and I have to work a lot harder," he says. "Susanne's parties are the best. People come expecting a circus, and they get it. They're in a party mood, rarin' to go. And you have all the visuals." Mace d.j.s in drag, as Sister Dimension—affectionately known as Sister. To look up at the booth and see, say, a nurse spinning the records "adds to the madness," he explains.

Bartsch's costumes are designed by Pearl, who also works her parties. In a voice so soft that a listener has to lean forward to hear the ends of his sentences, he talks about his involvement in the theatre—in Johannesburg, where he grew up, helping out in wardrobe departments during school vacations, and then in London, where he worked at Covent Garden and did costumes for Michael Clarke, Matthew Hawkins, and other dancers, and now, since last summer, in New York, where he is attracting new commissions. He thinks that theatrical dance has got "a bit dull" since the all-purpose Spandex unitard entered the repertory. "What's important for me is to be stimulated visually," he explains. He likes to look at fashion magazines to see what people are doing, he says, but he has no interest in making clothes that could be presented in a fashion show, or in having his name on a label that people could sell in a shop. All the pieces he makes for Bartsch are one of a kind. Most of them, he says, take corsetry as their point of departure. "First and foremost, it's attack the waistline," Pearl explains, "and get that right down to as far as she's prepared to go, which is eighteen inches." The first outfit he made for her was what he calls "a dildo corset"—with a huge appliquéd penis, the head embroidered in fake rubies, with two large crystal stones for testicles, and a spray of wired pearls ("for a necklace look") emerging from the top. For New Year's Eve, he made her a sheer-mesh unitard that laced up the legs in back and was covered in swirl-shaped gold pigskin appliqués and encrusted with pearls—"so that when she wears it she looks nude and the appliqués look like tattoos," he explains. Once, on a trip to Paris, Bartsch went to Pigalle and bought a pair of S & M boots, which she brought back to Pearl as the basis for what she describes as "a saloon look." He did some research in fetish magazines from the twenties and thirties, and combined ideas he found there—"which were really beautiful," he says—with a circus-pony headpiece: a spike sprouting pink feathers. Pearl readily admits that these garments "are not (a) comfortable, or (b) meant for riding around in taxis," and he adds, "I do sometimes feel sorry for the people who have to wear them. But I think a costume is something one learns to work with."

Gina Germaine arrives wearing high heels, jeans, and a lacy black bra that puckers slightly across the cups, the way a young girl's does when she doesn't quite fill it out. "Cowabunga, dudes," she greets the guys working on the lights. She insists on being identified as "New York's Most Popular Party Girl." "Write it down," she tells me, in a breathy contralto. I ask her where she's from. New York, she says, but originally Alabama. I tell her I don't hear an accent. "It's in there," she assures me. Her show clothes are designed by her dressmaker, Dorinne Corey, who lives in Harlem; everything else she buys off the rack. She works all over—in the Poconos, in Richmond, as well as at the Copa. "Mostly, I just walk around and look beautiful and let everybody else dance," she says. She has brought six changes of costume for tonight, and when she's asked to describe the look she has been doing lately she answers, "Suzanne Somers in Las Vegas—healthy, substantial, powerful, aggressive."

Baroness Ostentasia Vulgari—called Baroness for short, with the accent on the "-ess"—travels with a thirty-six-inch Pullman on wheels, a wig case, and a monogrammed Louis Vuitton train case to carry her jewels. She began working Bartsch's parties a year ago, when she turned up at the Copa wearing a look Bartsch liked, and was hired. What was the look? "Very high-fashion glamour, yet trashy," she explains. On the strength of her reputation in the clubs in Manhattan, she is in the process of launching a store downtown. It will sell what she calls "club clothes," and feature some East Village designers and also Anthony Wong, who makes Baroness's own wardrobe. Baroness as a character—and Baroness *is* a character, complete with a European past, a trail of ex-husbands (some dead, some divorced), scandalous rumors that continue to follow her, and an extensive collection of jewels that are her trophies—was born one night two years ago, when her alter ego, otherwise known as Joseph, decided to go to a club in drag for the first time. "I was with a friend," she explains, "and when we got there I said to him, 'Look at the line outside this club. I'm too old to wait on line—I did that years ago. Let's go home.' He said, 'No, no, no, get out of the cab and see what happens.' I got out of the cab. The doorperson parted the crowd and opened up those velvet ropes. And I have to tell you this: every time those velvet ropes open up for me, it's still a thrill, no matter how many times it happens."

Matthew Andersen, who goes by the name of Plague ("as in bubonic," he volunteers), is a makeup artist and hairdresser for fashion sittings. "I'm a drag queen, but I don't try to look like a woman, because I'm a six-foot man with a man's face," he explains. "So I don't wear fake breasts or do horrendous things to my genitals to get them out of the way. I'm more of a creature, really." Andersen, who was born and brought up in Australia and moved to New York three years ago, is half of a double act with his friend Zaldy, a delicate young man with exotic Filipino features and silky black hair down to his waist. In drag, they dress alike. A recent graduate of the Fashion Institute of Technology, Zaldy is, for the time being, happy doing what he calls "custom stuff," like the Lady Miss Kier's costumes for Deee-Lite's next video. Of the designers working today, he admires Thierry Mugler in particular. Mugler knows Bartsch: he's been to the Copa, and many people have suggested that the clothes he's been designing lately follow her example. "Oh, yeah," Zaldy says, "Susanne has definitely inspired him in a big way. His clothes are getting nastier and scantier, and it's really from her parties."

George Nuñez, who, along with his mother and his brother, Leo, owns and runs Warsaw, arrives at the club late in the afternoon. He surveys the decorations: a giant arch of balloons center stage and bright crêpe-paper streamers hung on the wall as a backdrop; a long fringe of streamers above the bar; more streamers hanging in a halo around the tops of two mirrored columns that border the dance floor like two disco palm trees. The effect is festive, tropical. Nuñez says that what's amazing about Bartsch is the level of energy she brings to a club and then manages to sustain for five hours. Warsaw has been in business a little over a year and a half now, and on an average night it pulls in a few local drag queens, but, he says, they're not as outrageous as Bartsch's, not as stimulating to the club's metabolism. "Because Susanne's drag queens are basically entertainers, and the drag queens we get are full-time—I mean, for them it's a way of life," he explains. "You never see them during the day—or see very few of them. They're night people. Interesting breed." Nuñez pauses for a moment, watching Bartsch and her team tacking balloons to the ceiling. "I don't understand drag queens," he admits. "I mean, if you are gay and you like men, why would you screw a man who looks like a woman?"

At nine-thirty, Madame comes to the door of her suite in her bathrobe, pours us both a peach schnapps, and suggests that I leaf through her enormous album of press clippings while she finishes applying her makeup in the bathroom. Soon she emerges wearing a long Chinese-style sheath, of black velvet and white satin, with black medium-heeled pumps, long white satin gloves, pearl-drop earrings, and a pearl headdress. "Pardon me while I get a fan," she says in a vaguely Russian-accented falsetto. I tell her that I understand she is planning to return to the stage. "I have never stopped performing," she says testily. I ask her about the calendar-girl contest that Bartsch runs here in Miami, as a way of encouraging the local drag queens to turn out. "Ooh," she says, shuddering. "Change the subject on that, darling. That's so *feeble*." I say that I understand she spent the afternoon sewing. "I was hoping that we could talk about something a little more serious," she snaps, "but I guess it's not possible."

"Of course it's possible," I assure her.

"Well," she replies indignantly, "I don't know why I don't get any serious questions."

The doorbell rings. Baroness enters, wearing a strawberry-pink wig and walking friskily in gold lamé spike heels: she has come for help with her dress—a short gold stretch affair with big, square paillettes, the hemline creeping above the tops of her purple stockings, which are hoisted by a garter belt. "*Pardon*," Madame says, in French. "We go in the dressing room."

After Baroness leaves, I ask Madame about the tradition of drag in America. "You know, drag is a very derogatory word in America," she says. "So I always say one shouldn't even mention it." After a moment's consideration, she adds, "I can say I've seen drag for over thirty years in every form, and I think right now it's at the worst it can get. Years ago, when people dragged up, they sat down and designed the dress, went to look for the fabric and the bones and the stays and then for the corset that would work underneath the dress, and they'd have it all made—have the nylons made and have the shoes created and dyed to match the whole. There's no one who does that anymore, except maybe myself. No one. In my time, all of us did it. All of us. Now they're happy to slap on two little lashes and a pot of rouge and wrap half a yard of fabric around themselves, and then they can sing along with anyone they want to on the records, and goodbye. Bah to them! What is drag? It means so much to so many people. Most people who find it offensive are homophobic. That's another element of it—you have to broach it, whether you want to deal with it or not."

JUST after midnight, Jacobs, Fritz, and I set out for Warsaw and run into Plague and Zaldy, dressed as twin ostriches and heading back to the hotel for a costume change. A line winds around one side of the club. On the lookout at the door is Ty, wearing a long platinum wig, white platform sandals, a white Playtex-style bra, and a longline girdle. "That's love," Fritz says.

Inside, Sister Dimension is manning the d.j. booth in Martian drag, wearing an Azzedine Alaia-style acid-green stretch halter bodysuit, which clings to the contours of a fake rear end, and huge arched eyelashes, pointy ears, and antennas that bob in time to the music. Baroness has changed wigs: now she's wearing a silver tinsel China chop. Upstairs, Alexis del Lago is holding court in a navy-and-white silk-charmeuse sailor top and palazzo pants, with a matching beret. The crowd is disproportionately male and barechested. There are, however, plenty of local contestants for the Miss January pageant, which is finally won by a queen in housewife drag, who is wearing a shapeless dress and, as a headpiece, a high tower of bright-pink plastic curlers and is carrying a bag of Doritos and a can of Diet Pepsi. The dance floor is variously populated by a cowgirl shooting her pistols; a square-jawed lifeguard type in black-and-white striped trunks and a jester's cap; a bathing beauty wearing a hot-pink tank suit and a ribbon, bandolier-style, that reads "Miss Nicaragua," and carrying roses; and one lost soul in khaki pants and an argyle vest. Pearl, dressed as an orchid, hovers shyly at the edge of the stage. Front and center is Bartsch herself, dancing to her heart's content, in a Brazilian Mardi Gras getup—a "cape" of white maribou over a white bra and white draped bikini briefs, and a white sequin skullcap topped with gigantic white ostrich plumes.

A man sidles up to where I'm standing on the sidelines and offers to buy me a drink. I ask him if he's come to Bartsch's nights before. This is the first time, he replies, but he's been to Warsaw on two other occasions—always at the insistence of his roommate, he hastily explains, who is gay. I understand, I tell him. A silence falls between us as our attention settles on a completely bald man, familiar as a model for Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs, wearing a crinoline and dancing on top of a nearby go-go box. "Sad, isn't it?" my neighbor says.

"What's sad?" I ask.

"All these misfits wishing they were something they're not. There are a lot of tragic people in this room." Well, I thought to myself, they certainly don't *look* sad. I remembered something Jacobs had said to me that afternoon: that Bartsch's parties always make him think of kids who weren't accepted by their peers, because they were too effeminate, or too short, or too wide, or too whatever. And now all those outcasts have come together in this disco *Salon des refusés* that Bartsch is running, and together they have found their revenge: while their persecutors have grown up to live life by the book, upholding the conventions by which they are deemed attractive or important or successful, the so-called freaks are revelling in their freakishness, and having such great fun doing it that they've turned the tables—now it's the so-called normal people who are the outsiders, looking in.

By four o'clock, the crowd has begun to thin. The queens, with one or two diehard exceptions, abdicate the stage. The streamers have all been pulled down, but the balloons are intact, like fruit on trees that have lost their foliage. Around four-thirty, Bartsch, still in costume, and Bassett, who has changed back into his street clothes, leave the club.

Back in their penthouse at the hotel, the fatigue all around is catatonic. Jacobs and Fritz stop by. Bartsch is crouched on the floor picking up little white beads that spilled on the carpet, and muttering something about being "such a Wirgo." Baroness sticks her head in, to announce that the queens are all meeting for breakfast at Denny's, across the street. Bartsch declines; she is staying behind to call the airlines and try to get the members of her party who were booked to fly home on Eastern, which has just gone out of business, onto other flights. Jacobs and Fritz decide to call it a night. "Thanks for coming, girlfriends!" Bartsch calls after them. "Did you have a good time?"

—Holly Brubach

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THE THEATRE

Steps

ALAN AYCKBOURN's farce "Taking Steps," at Circle in the Square, is about just that. The play is set in the three stories of an English country house—a living room downstairs, a bedroom above it, and an attic. The setting is on one level, though, and is surrounded by a path, marked by metal strips to indicate stairs; the characters climb around, often with effort, passing one another obliviously in what appears to be the same room but isn't. The action begins in the bedroom, where Elizabeth, the mistress of the house, is talking with her brother. She is planning to leave her husband, and to resume her career as a dancer; he is planning to retrieve his fiancée, who has been arrested on suspicion of prostitution, and to shelter her in the house. They are interrupted by the husband's solicitor, by the husband himself, and then by the owner of the house, in a black uniform and black helmet appropriate to the Yamaha on which he arrives. Elizabeth goes about packing and then sneaks by them carrying her suitcase; the brother comes back with the fiancée and parks her in a room on one side of the attic. Husband reads wife's farewell letter and, in a state of collapse, decides to sleep in the attic, forcing the fiancée to hide in a closet. Enough synopsis, which can't be much help anyway. "Taking Steps" could well have more going on at once than any other play ever written, and since most of the comedy depends on surprise, I won't spoil it. Every notion is a joy, and the clever setting is at the heart of much of the funniness. Words are given their due—actually, the funniest word in the play is "no," as spoken by Elizabeth—but Ayckbourn is no gagman; the characters are believable, and so, by the way, is the unhappiness of the marriage that seems to have come apart.

In an author's note printed in the program Mr. Ayckbourn states, "I have written very little farce. . . . 'Taking Steps' . . . was written, like all my plays, for the Theatre in the Round in Scarborough. In this type of theatre, doors, the staple diet of most farces, are really impractical. So I've substituted floors instead." Watching the show, I realized again that farce demands a performance that matches the script in discipline and excellence. Precision to match precision, as in the National Theatre's "A Flea in Her Ear" and in Bert Lahr's "Hotel Paradiso," many long years ago. The performance at Circle in the Square is disappointing—like summer stock, I thought at one point. The actors, many of whom have good credentials, never seem to make a company. Even so, it was a great pleasure to watch Christopher Benjamin, an English import, who touched exactly the right note as the husband, and Spike McClure, as the rather tentative young solicitor. It cannot be said too strongly that the performance, inadequate though it may be, never dims the brilliance of the play. Alan Strachan was the director; James Morgan and Gail Brassard designed the setting and costumes.

There's "Absent Friends," at the Manhattan Theatre Club, and now this gem—two Ayckbourns in two weeks. My cup runneth over.

—EDITH OLIVER

•

EAST IS EAST DEPARTMENT

[*From "What the Maid Saw," by Yasutaka Tsutsui, translated from the Japanese by Adam Kabat*]

Katsumi had come across the image of the peach in a poem by an American poet.

The years are taking their toll.
It's time to roll up the cuffs of my
 pants.—
Time to part my hair from the back—
Time to eat peaches.
I put on my white flannel pants and
 walked on the beach.
I heard mermaids singing to each
 other—
Mermaids who would never sing out
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THE SKY LINE

The Death of the Skyscraper?

THE architecture of New York, like that of any city, can be divided into categories. Numerically, our largest category is that of private houses and apartment buildings, but if people were asked to choose the kind of structure that best symbolizes New York few would think of houses. The symbol would be found instead in what is by number the smallest of our categories: that of the skyscraper, which for almost a hundred years now has attracted the attention of the world and has been the distinctively American contribution to architecture that other nations seek to imitate the moment they can afford to do so. Since the Second World War, not only such long-established metropolises as Paris, London, and Tokyo have been irresistibly tempted to put up skyscrapers but also the new cities of the Third World, however inappropriate they may be to their needs.

The skyscraper has always symbolized New York City to the world, but not all New Yorkers have felt inclined to champion it. Among the earliest voices raised against it was that of a native New Yorker, Henry James, who on a visit to America in 1904-05, after many years of residence abroad, found much in the city to delight (and alarm) him and a few things—remarkably few, given the notorious exactingness of his discriminations—that struck him as possessing no redeeming virtue. He set down his impressions of New York in "The American Scene," a superb account of his ten months of travel through the country. (James boasted to his publishers that he intended to make it the best travel book ever written, and he was not far off the mark.)

If to early readers of "The American Scene" skyscrapers seemed to occupy an especially prominent place on James's list of undesirable novelties, it may have been because no one had expected him to put them there. They were, after all, the one New World invention that travellers could be counted on to observe as they steamed into the Upper Bay and, having observed them, could be counted on to be enraptured by. In the course of his American stay, James praised without stint certain other indigenous novelties, like fast motorcars, that might not have been expected to earn the praise of a plump and sedentary author of sixty-two. If fast cars appealed to him, why not skyscrapers?

James answered that question with a vehemence exceptional in his writings. He availed himself of every opportunity to denounce skyscrapers, although those structures were then playing a major ceremonial role in our local architecture and could have been expected to arouse in James, a connoisseur of the ceremonial, something like veneration. For in those days, when most visitors from abroad arrived by sea, skyscrapers were not simply marvels of engineering, called into being by the high cost of land on a tiny island, but also metaphors, leaping up against the horizon like so many beckoning gateposts to the city. To immigrants staring at them from the pit of steerage in early-morning light (if not to James pontifically pacing a broad upper deck at a later hour) they must have seemed an earthly approximation of those pearly gates which in folklore open, after much labor, to paradisiacal rewards.

Victoria Roberts

"Where did verve get us?"

In the opening paragraph of "The American Scene" James gives what is for him an unprecedentedly racy description of his native city: he compares it, with evident relish, to a whore. He has disembarked on the New Jersey shore and is standing *en plein air* aboard the ferry carrying him across the Hudson to New York. He writes:

> It was not, indeed, at Hoboken, on emerging from the comparatively assured order of the great berth of the ship, that recognition *was* difficult: there, only too confoundingly familiar and too serenely exempt from change, the waterside squalor of the great city put forth again its most inimitable notes, showed so true to the barbarisms it had not outlived that one could only fall to wondering what obscure inward virtue had preserved it. There was virtue evident enough in the crossing of the water, that brave sense of the big, bright, breezy bay; of light and space and multitudinous movement; of the serried, bristling city, held in the easy embrace of its great good-natured rivers very much as a battered and accommodating beauty may sometimes be "distinguished" by a gallant less fastidious, with his open arms, than his type would seem to imply.

The adjectives "serried" and "bristling," which James commonly employs as terms of approbation, are not to be thought of as referring to skyscrapers; they refer, instead, to the repetition of brick and brownstone side streets that, viewed by him from mid-Hudson, seemed to march in close rank mile after mile northward from the Battery, their low rooflines occasionally interrupted by gabled loft buildings and church spires. In high spirits and without the least hint of that prissiness which his detractors look for in him, James celebrates the degree to which his birthplace remains recognizable by its unmitigated disreputableness.

It was James's visits to Wall Street that prompted his sharpest attacks upon those “multitudinous sky-scrapers standing up to the view, from the water, like extravagant pins in a cushion already overplanted, and stuck in as in the dark, anywhere and anyhow.” He went down to the financial district on a number of occasions, always eagerly hoping to understand its processes and perhaps turn them into literary “material,” as his contemporary Zola had earlier done in Paris. James did his best to open himself to its wonders, but all in vain; he asserts that although he “felt” the mystery of the Street he could not penetrate it. Ruefully he writes:

> This sense of a baffled curiosity, an intellectual venture forever renounced, was surely enough a state of feeling, and indeed in presence of the different half-hours, as memory presents them, at which I gave myself up both to the thrill of Wall Street (by which I mean that of the whole wide edge of the whirlpool), and the too accepted, too irredeemable ignorance, I am at a loss to see what intensity of response was wanting. The imagination might have responded more if there had been a slightly less settled inability to understand what everyone, what any one, was really doing.

Of the skyscrapers, each “a swarming city in itself,” he writes:

> Crowned not only with no history, but with no credible possibility of time for history, and consecrated by no uses save the commercial at any cost, they are simply the most piercing notes in that concert of the expensively provisional into which your supreme sense of New York resolves itself. They never begin to speak to you, in the manner of the builded majesties of the world as we have heretofore known such—towers or temples or fortresses or palaces—with the authority of things of permanence or even of things of long duration. One story is good only till another is told, and sky-scrapers are the last word of economic ingenuity only till another word be written. This shall be possibly a word of still uglier meaning, but the vocabulary of thrift at any price shows boundless resources, and the consciousness of that truth, the consciousness of the finite, the menaced, the essentially *invented* state, twinkles ever, to my perception, in the thousand glassy eyes of these giants of the mere market.

One notes in this excerpt that James was so ardent an adversary of skyscrapers that he was able to entertain two opposing notions about them at the same moment: he objected to their having ever come into existence and he objected to them because they were likely to be so temporary. Aesthetically, he disliked what later generations of critics have considered one of their most striking aspects—the multiplicity of windows which their steel-frame construction permitted. And, much as he admired the technology that had produced fast motorcars, he deplored the technology that had produced fast elevators; he wrote of his intense dislike for being carried up and down in a basket inside a cage. Mounting or descending a grand staircase under one's own power and at one's own pace was much more to his liking.

Still, James's view of the skyscraper as dehumanizing both to those who occupied it and to those who were obliged to live within close range of it was sound in principle and would endure. He acutely perceived the threat of the then brand-new Trinity Building, rising above Trinity churchyard on lower Broadway. He tells us:

> I gazed across at the special sky-scraper that overhangs poor old Trinity to the north—a south face as high and wide as the mountain-wall that drops the Alpine avalanche, from time to time, upon the village, and the village spire, at its foot; the interest of this case being above all, as I learned, to my stupefaction, in the fact that the very creators of the extinguisher are the churchwardens themselves, or at least the trustees of the church property.

James saw clearly the psychological difference for the inhabitants of a city between structures sacred and profane, and he saw, too, without sentimentality, that the value of a particular sacred structure resided not in the theology it espoused but in its simply being there. When James grows indignant, a storm cloud of rhetoric threatens to engulf his readers; in the course of excoriating the Trinity trustees, he bursts out, “What was the case but magnificent for pitiless ferocity?—that inexorable law of the growing invisibility of churches, their everywhere reduced or abolished *presence*, which is nine-tenths of their virtue, receiving thus, at such hands, its supreme consecration.” (Translation: “We do well to be angry when we cannot see our churches.”) And, of course, James was right to be concerned, not only about churches in general but about skyscrapers in general. In 1916—by coincidence, the year James died—an intolerably bulky neighbor of the Trinity Building, the Equitable Building, cast such a vast shadow that it led New York to pass the first zoning ordinances in the United States, mandating setbacks at specified intervals up the steep sides

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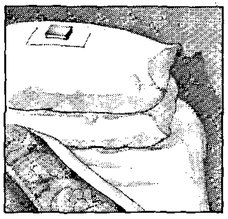

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of James's imagined mountain walls.

Despite James, the skyscraper has flourished here throughout the century, at least in part because it serves as a symbol of aspiration in a society devoted to success in business: the higher the building, the greater the builder. In some cases, the symbol acquires a celebrity that makes it a more than ordinarily merchandisable commodity. This phenomenon occurred early in the century with the Flatiron and Woolworth Buildings, and later with the Empire State and Chrysler Buildings. As their fame increased, so did their profitability. The Woolworth Building, designed by Cass Gilbert in the Flamboyant Gothic style, was for many years the tallest building in the world, and a major tourist attraction. James had predicted that skyscrapers would one day render churches *invisible*; the Woolworth Building confirmed James's fears not only because it diminished one's view of its neighbor, the charming little eighteenth-century St. Paul's Chapel, but also because in the world's eyes the Woolworth Building itself became sacred—it was nicknamed the Cathedral of Commerce. Nor was it by chance that the building functioned as a superb free advertisement for Woolworth's international chain of five-and-ten-cent stores. If the building had been left wholly unoccupied, it could still have been listed among the company's most valuable assets, generating an amount of good will worth millions of dollars.

d.ehrenberg

The doom of the skyscraper has been predicted innumerable times, and always prematurely. Now, with the advent of the nineteen-nineties, the old failed predictions may come true at last: not for any of the commonsense reasons that were offered so freely (and so ineffectually) in the past, by James and other critics—for example, that skyscrapers were uneconomic to build and maintain, that the amount of rentable space per floor was likely to prove inefficient, or that they did injury to their neighbors by depriving them of light and air—but for a reason that causes us to hark back to that cranky, acute, and much underestimated British anthropologist Lord Raglan (the great-grandson of the Lord Raglan for whom the sleeve was named), who used to argue that the primary purpose of architecture was ceremonial, and not, as most architects and students of architecture assumed, the provision of shelter.

It is a proposition that seems at first glance unreasonable, and even outrageous; at a second glance, and in the face of the evidence of history, we find ourselves obliged to accept it. We know it in our bones and yet willfully, persistently take care to forget it: architecture is not simply the physical presence within whose walls and under whose roofs we carry on our lives but also what one may as well boldly call a metaphysical presence, having to do with the shelter of our minds along with that of our bodies. And behind the ceremonial, even in the most secular-seeming societies, glimmers at least a remnant of the sacred (the authentically sacred, *not the phony sacredness* of the Cathedral of Commerce)—a remnant as detectable in bricks and mortar as it is in literature, music, and the graphic and glyptic arts. If this is so, it follows that when a certain species of architecture ceases to embody a metaphysical presence then that particular species degenerates with astonishing speed into farce.

The skyscraper has just arrived at that critical point in its history. Most of the skyscrapers that we take seriously as works of art are now at least twenty years old; our most recent high rises look as if they were intended to serve not as the proud adornments of a great city but as the flashy centerpieces of an instant Disneyland. The heart of this new Disneyland is Times Square, where eight or ten skyscrapers have been built over the past decade. No doubt it could be protested that since Times Square was always a kind of unplanned, knockabout Disneyland the sudden eruption in its midst of a large number of silly skyscrapers should not be an occasion for surprise and disappointment. But until a few years ago Times Square was truly a place of entertainment—a gaudy, tawdry medley of theatres, restaurants, rehearsal halls, hotels, honky-tonk sex shops, going-out-of-business electronics and jewelry shops, and the like—and not what city administrations over the past ten or fifteen years have perversely encouraged it to become: a cold-blooded corporate simulacrum of an amusement park, designed to contain millions of square feet of offices filled with tens of thousands of office drones. Times Square has been made into a new version of James's impenetrable Wall Street shifted several miles northward and wearing as the most inappropriate of disguises façades of fancy neon and fluorescent signage. No wonder that, like James hovering downtown at the brink of the financial whirlpool, we feel a baffled curiosity when we enter Times Square today! As we glance about those once familiar precincts, we observe that a calculatedly gimcrack Potemkin village has emerged from the ruin of its lively, disorderly predecessor.

This village of skyscrapers calls out for our attention in the manner of a sideshow barker. Two of the skyscrapers have skeletal towers springing from their roofs, for which no purpose can be detected beyond serving as not very playful echoes of the mast on top of the Empire State Building—a mast that was originally designed for the practical purpose of providing mooring in midtown for transatlantic dirigibles. Embassy Suites, a hotel in Times Square that occupies a new gray masonry skyscraper with red and electric-blue trim, streamlined in a fashion reminiscent of the pavilions at the World's Fair of 1939, has been ingeniously cantilevered above the old Palace Theatre. Patrons of the hotel take elevators to a lobby on the third floor. (The lobby, uneasily out of synch with the exterior design of the building, is in an approximation of Art Deco style. These so-called "sky" lobbies are an increasingly common feature of high-rise hotels and office buildings, since they leave the ground floors available for rental.) The Novotel, on Broadway between Fifty-first and Fifty-second Streets, its cladding grotesquely speckled with advertising signs of assorted shapes and sizes, has a lobby on the seventh floor, while the monstrous Marriott Marquis Hotel, on Broadway between Forty-fifth and Forty-sixth Streets, has its lobby on the eighth floor. (One is reminded of a poem of Frost's, in which he adjures a builder to make him a chimney that starts not on a carpentered shelf in midair but "clear from the ground.")

If the farcical appearance of these skyscrapers implies a terminal lack of vigor, the failure of several of them in terms of profitability is likely to hasten

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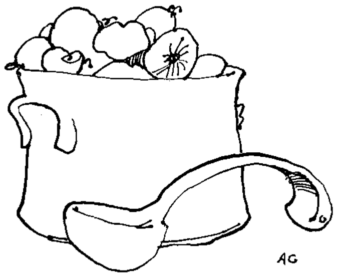
the doom of the skyscraper as a building type. The hum of money-making that the builders expected to hear behind all that winking and blinking signage would seem to be inaudible. One of the new Times Square skyscrapers, although finished, cannot afford to open its doors, it is said, because it lacks a major tenant. Two others, having opened their doors because a single major tenant required them to do so, are reportedly running at a loss too great to be borne for long.



On certain sites in the neighborhood of Times Square, buildings have been demolished to make way for skyscrapers that now either will not be built at all or will be postponed until the next building boom arrives, if it ever does. (Real-estate developers, optimistic by nature, like to speak of "cycles," since the word promises the inevitability of a return; history makes no such promises.) A project that was to have been subsidized in large part by a promised abatement of city taxes—the Forty-second Street Redevelopment Corporation's plan to erect four bizarre, quasi-deconstructivist skyscrapers at the meeting of Forty-second Street and Broadway and Seventh Avenue—keeps making optimistic announcements but has apparently been unable to secure the major tenants without which it cannot afford to begin construction.

The decline of the skyscraper has spread beyond Times Square. A few weeks ago, the city announced that a huge skyscraper project on the site of the South Ferry terminal had been cancelled; with some sixty million square feet of office space currently unoccupied in the city, and with office rents in some areas dropping to a quarter of the amount that would have to be charged in a new building, the backers of the project encountered little interest on the part of prospective tenants. A similar fate is likely to befall several other major skyscraper projects, including the towers that Mortimer Zuckerman has been planning to build at Columbus Circle; the cluster of towers that Donald Trump was planning to erect along the Hudson River in the Sixties; and—in some respects the most scandalously inappropriate project of all—the thousand-foot-high tower that a consortium of developers was hoping to insinuate into the narrow canyon of Madison Avenue at Forty-sixth Street: in my view, a flagrant abuse of the intent and letter of the zoning laws based on a legalistic manipulation of air rights belonging to the owners of Grand Central Terminal.

Any depression, whether short or long, mild or severe, is bound to injure us all. I take no pleasure in suggesting that the collapse of the building boom in New York will give our architects time for second thoughts about the consequences, moral as well as aesthetic, of the work they have produced in such abundance during the pell-mell decade of the eighties. Looking back at the hundreds of structures that have been built here, we may be able to identify a handful that accord with my definition of architecture as a source of psychological well-being. Of the few, perhaps one or two—the American Broadcasting Company Building, on West Sixty-sixth Street, the Noguchi studio and garden, in Long Island City—would be of a quality that could arouse in us some portion of the response that the best of our landmark structures (City Hall, Grace Church, the Seagram Building) invariably do arouse. It is possible that we haven't paid sufficient attention to them up to now because they are on a scale so comparatively diminutive that, as James long ago feared, they have been overshadowed by what he termed "these giants of the mere market." But since the market and its monsters are at present in jeopardy the city may be obliged to embrace the Miesian maxim "Less is more" as a novelty having to do not with aesthetics but with impoverishment. Given that by most of the usual measurements—population, income, value of taxable property, and the like—the city is no longer expanding at an exuberant rate (and may soon reach a point of stasis, or even of decline), is it possible that we New Yorkers might be willing to accept a symbol that was small instead of large, low instead of lofty, modest instead of ostentatious? If it turns out that our traditional symbol of success, the skyscraper, is truly moribund, we ought to begin considering the choice of a symbol to take its place. —BRENDAN GILL

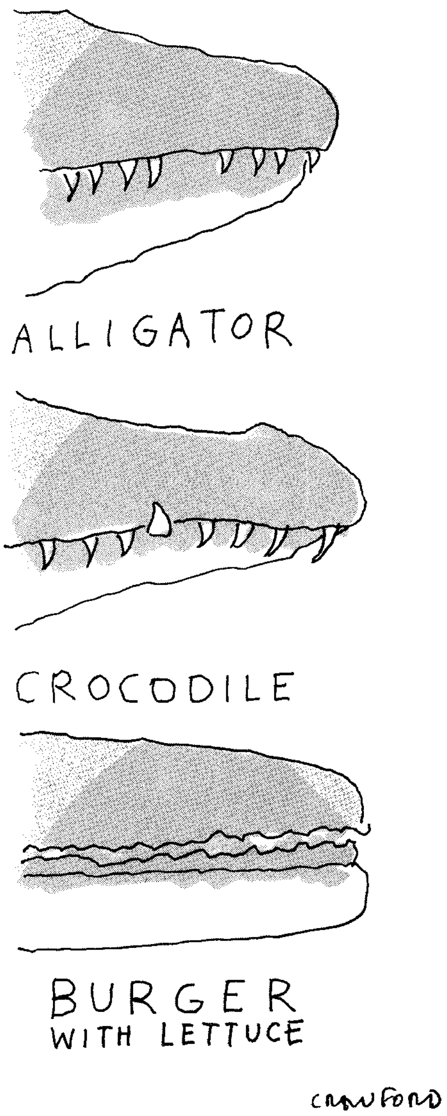
BOOKS

The One That Got Away

HE was, in his time, the most famous and most controversial member of Britain's Royal Family. As a young man, he seemed extravagantly blessed with charm, good looks, and charisma, and his many friends and admirers entertained the fondest hopes of his prospects. When the supreme opportunity of his life eventually presented itself, he began his great task with considerable popular support, and it seemed at first that he must carry all before him. But within a year his splendid position was completely forfeit, and he was obliged to leave the country, defeated and disgraced. Thereafter, he was deserted by most of his friends, and was condemned to wander the world as an unhappy and embittered exile. He brooded resentfully on his banishment, raged and fulminated ineffectually against his enemies, grew more paranoid and more pitiful with each passing year, and sired no male heir. Yet at his death it was impossible not to feel an overwhelming sense of talents wasted, of promise unfulfilled, and of opportunities thrown away.

This was the melancholy fate that befell Charles Edward Stuart, otherwise known as Bonnie Prince Charlie, or the Young Pretender. In 1745, he led a rising of Highland clans, invaded England, and moved as far south as Derby. His objective was to overturn the House of Hanover and restore the deposed Stuart dynasty, but this coup collapsed in bloody disarray at the Battle of Culloden, which effectively ended the Jacobite challenge to the British throne. Two hundred years later, royal history came close to repeating itself in the tragic tale of King Edward VIII, previously Prince of Wales, and subsequently Duke of Windsor. For his life may be described in precisely the same words that have been used here to summarize the hapless career of the Young Pretender. But, as is implied by that unusual phrase "subsequently Duke of Windsor," there was one significant difference in the misfortunes of these two similarly sad men: whereas Bonnie Prince Charlie failed to obtain the throne he so ardently coveted, Edward VIII voluntarily gave his up after a reign that did not last the whole of the year 1936.

Yet, as he brooded on his abdication in his years of exile, the Duke of Windsor came to believe that he had been compelled to relinquish his crown. As heir to the throne, so this self-justifying argument ran, he had been a noticeably forward-looking and reformist Prince of Wales, who sought to modernize the Royal Family and bring what was still an essentially Victorian institution into belated contact with the twentieth century. And, as King of England, he had hoped to shake up the staid and stuffy ruling establishment, epitomized by such (to him) antediluvian figures as Stanley Baldwin, the Prime Minister, and Cosmo Gordon Lang, the Archbishop of Canterbury. But, the argument continued, in falling in love with Wallis Simpson, a divorced American, King Edward played straight into his enemies' hands, by giving them the perfect pretext for forcing him out. Made to choose between his crown and his happiness, he unhesitatingly decided on the second. He gave up the throne, married Wallis, and remained completely devoted to her until the day he died. Thus was born the twentieth century's greatest romance: the story of a Prince Charming who became King-Emperor and then renounced the most illustrious position in the world for the sake of the woman he loved.



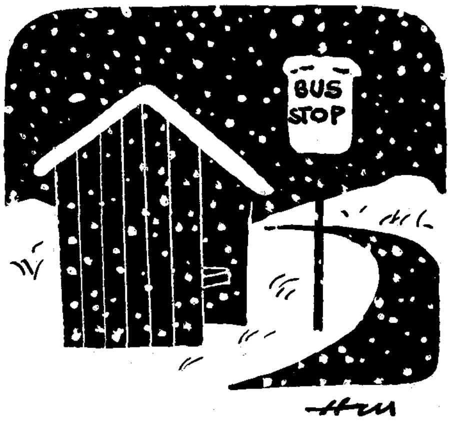
According to Frances Donaldson, whose brilliant biography "Edward VIII" was published in 1974, only two years after the Duke's death, the reality was far less glamorous. Her book was not an authorized life, and she did not have access to the ex-King's archives. But by talking to the still very considerable number of people who had known him she succeeded in producing what seemed to be a wholly convincing portrait. She depicted his unhappy upbringing, his desperate need for a mother substitute, and his lengthy love affair with a married society woman, Freda Dudley Ward. She showed how the fair-haired idol of the Empire and the media gradually declined into an inconsiderate and self-absorbed neurotic. She vividly conveyed his utter infatuation with Wallis Simpson, and his total inability, throughout the abdication crisis, to take in any viewpoint but his own. She noted his pro-German sympathies and described the Nazi plot to capture him in the Iberian peninsula during the summer of 1940. And she recounted his wartime activities as the accident-prone governor of the Bahamas, and the long period of unhappy and unbroken exile which followed. From this distinctly unflattering account it seemed possible to draw only one conclusion: in the broader perspective of British history, Edward's abdication was just about the best thing that could have happened—both to the monarchy and to the country.

Thus provoked, the widowed Duchess's French attorney, Maître Suzanne Blum, appointed a young English lawyer-historian, Michael Bloch, to present the case for the defense, and gave him full and exclusive access to the late Duke's papers. In a series of fiercely partisan volumes Bloch argued that the Duke was a far more admirable and honorable man than his enemies had ever conceded, and that after the abdication he was shabbily treated by his relatives. In "Wallis and Edward: Letters 1931-1937," published in 1986, he let the lovers speak for themselves, through their intimate correspondence from their first meeting until the time of their marriage. In "Operation Willi: The Nazi Plot to Kidnap the Duke of Windsor," published in 1984, he maintained that the Duke was far more the victim than the instigator of the Nazi intrigues that sprang up around him at that time. In "The Duke of Windsor's War," published in 1982, he analyzed the Duke's years as the governor of the Bahamas, claiming that he did a much better job than was generally admitted, while the British establishment was continuing its vendetta against him almost to the ends of the earth. And in "The Secret File of the Duke of Windsor," published in 1988, he showed how, from 1937 until 1955, the Royal Family worked to insure that the Duke should never return to his native land. No one, Bloch concluded, could read this account of royal vindictiveness without "a sense of shame and shock."

Either way, it is clear that King Edward VIII left skeletons aplenty rattling in the royal closet, and it is in this contentious context—unique in the history or historiography of any recent British monarch—that Philip Ziegler's new book, "King Edward VIII: A Biography" (Knopf; $24.95), must be read and understood. For this is the *official* biography, commissioned by the present Queen, and, as such, it takes its place somewhat uneasily alongside such earlier works of grave and courtly commemoration as "King George V," by Sir Harold Nicolson; "Queen Mary," by James Pope-Hennessy; and "King George VI," by Sir John Wheeler-Bennett. These weighty, tactful, and deferential volumes contained much material from the royal archives which had never been published before. They established authoritative interpretations of personality and achievements which have proved extremely difficult to challenge. They said little about the private lives of their royal subjects, and even less about their health or their finances.

Ziegler, given the very different nature of his subject, could hardly have been expected to adhere to this formula. Much that he has to say merely goes over the ground so impressively covered in Frances Donaldson's study, and a great deal of the most important (and sensational) documentation was published previously by Michael Bloch. Although it is generally agreed that the Duke was an unfortunate man and a sad one, seriously conflicting interpretations exist concerning his character, his brief reign as Edward VIII, his abdication, and the part played by other members of the Royal Family in insuring his subsequent exile. Nor would it have been appropriate—or convincing—to produce a tactful public life of a man whose tactless private life was both his obsession and his undoing. And, far from being a royal paragon, the Duke is still widely regarded as having been the black sheep of the royal flock—the man who selfishly turned his back on the very institution of monarchy that commissioned biographies of sovereigns are customarily intended to celebrate. But since Ziegler is the author of the much acclaimed official life of another twentieth-century royal maverick, Lord Mountbatten, it should come as no surprise that he has produced another shrewdly judged, highly polished, and totally riveting book.

THE man who was briefly to reign as Edward VIII was born in 1894 and was brought up in a bizarre royal environment that was in many ways more deprived than privileged. His father, who in 1910 acceded to the throne as King George V, was a boorish, philistine, and bad-tempered man, and his mother, Queen Mary, though more cultivated, was shy and distant. The young Prince grew up to be quick, bright, and eager to please, but his social horizons were severely limited, and his education—initially at the hands of an uninspired private tutor, and later at the Royal Naval College—was wholly inadequate. In 1911, he was invested as Prince of Wales at a specially invented ceremony staged at Caernarvon Castle, and, after a spell at Oxford which was too brief and too belated to remedy the defects in his education, he was soon caught up in the gruesome drama of the First World War. Like most men of his class and generation, he was eager to get to the Western Front. But his life could not be risked, and he became increasingly frustrated at being kept back from the trenches. This early unhappy experience of the shackles and constraints of royalty led to the Prince's first serious disagreement with his father, and may even have caused him to wonder whether he wanted to be king at all.



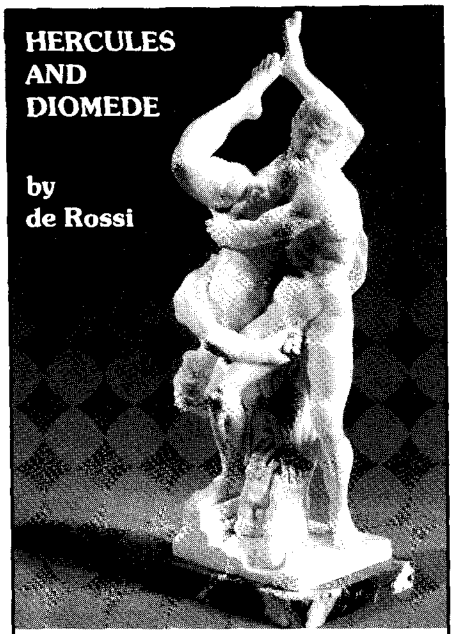
In the years immediately after the war, he established a unique reputation as a glamorous celebrity, partly because he seemed to be a thoroughly "modern" man, partly by his visits to provincial towns, where his charm and compassion almost invariably impressed, and partly by his sensationally successful tours throughout the Empire and the United States. But the schedules were gruelling, and they clearly took their toll of his excitable temperament. At home, he sought solace in the arms (and the bed) of Freda Dudley Ward; but, while she was admirably discreet, and the relationship brought him much comfort, it was clearly a dangerous liaison. As long as the Prince remained in love with her, there was no prospect of his finding a suitable wife. And the very existence of the liaison only heightened the tension that now existed almost continuously between father and son. In private, the Prince was thus a deeply unhappy man, and his unhappiness was inevitably reflected in the performance of his public duties.

Then, in January, 1931, he met Mrs. Simpson, and was almost at once bewitched and besotted by her. The exact nature of the hold she exercised over him will always remain unknowable, but there can be no doubting his unquestioning constancy and abject devotion. His long-standing friendship with Freda Dudley Ward was abruptly terminated, and his latest paramour, Lady Furness, was also summarily dismissed. By 1935, the Prince was so helplessly and hopelessly in love that it was rumored (or hoped) that he was seriously considering renouncing his rights of succession, so that he could marry Wallis as soon as she obtained her second divorce. But within a year his father was dead, and it was as King Edward VIII, rather than as Prince of Wales, that he now had to resolve the matter. Throughout his brief reign, this was his unceasing preoccupation, to the exclusion of virtually everything else. He read state papers cursorily, if at all, and was increasingly offhand about carrying out his public duties. He did nothing to "modernize" the monarchy, as some had hoped and others had feared he might. He urged that "something must be done" to help the millions of unemployed, but he himself did nothing. And, while he spoke indiscreetly (and unconstitutionally) of taking control of Britain's foreign affairs, and was undoubtedly in favor of closer ties with Nazi Germany, he was, on the whole, content to let his government pursue its own policy of appeasement.

The only matter that seriously concerned him was securing Wallis as his bride. He had always been determined to live as he pleased, and even as king he stubbornly and naïvely persisted in thinking that he could make (and break) with impunity the rules governing his behavior. But in believing that personal inclination mattered as much as—or even more than—public duty he was setting himself against everything decent and decorous that the monarchy had come to stand for in British life. For Wallis was a divorced woman, and in the nineteen-thirties divorce was contrary to the teachings of the Church of England. Yet it was that very church whose faith and doctrine the King was obliged by Parliament to uphold and defend, and whose prelates would soon be crowning—and anointing—him sovereign. Under those circumstances, it was just not possible for Wallis to become queen, and to the guardians of traditional values it was clear what the King must do. The Prime Minister, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the King's two private secretaries, Alec Hardinge and Alan Lascelles, had no doubt that their sovereign should put his public duty before his romantic inclinations. And this view was shared by Queen Mary; by her second son, the ever more anxious Duke of York; and by his wife, Elizabeth. But the King insisted that his personal happiness must come first. He gave up his throne that he might marry his love, and he duly did so, in France, in June of 1937.

The post-abdication settlement only intensified the family crisis. From the very outset, relations between the new King George VI (which the Duke of York had become) and the exiled Duke of Windsor (as the ex-King was now styled) were poisoned by disagreements over money. The Duke foolishly claimed to be short of funds, and demanded a generous annual allowance. But the King's advisers soon discovered that Windsor had lied about the true extent of his very considerable fortune, and the two brothers never really trusted each other again. The treatment meted out to the Duchess of Windsor only made matters worse. She was explicitly denied the title Her Royal Highness, and until 1972, when she stayed in Buckingham Palace at the time of her husband's funeral, no member of the Royal Family would receive her. To the Duke, who had blithely supposed that if he abdicated all would be forgiven and forgotten, these were calculated insults, and he resented them for the rest of his life. But to his family they were the inevitable—and regrettable—consequence of his own ill-judged actions. If the twice-divorced Wallis was not fit to be queen, then it automatically followed that she was not fit to be a member of the Royal Family in any less exalted station. The impasse was total, and was never bridged.

Thus cast adrift, the Windsors were effectively left to their own devices. But, having been excessively privileged and protected as Prince of Wales and as King (when he very much resented it), the Duke did not find it easy to adjust to the harsh circumstances of the real world. The Windsors settled—temporarily, they hoped—in France, and began to live what already seemed to be something of a shadow-life. A visit to Germany, ostensibly to study working-class housing conditions, was a public-relations disaster, and a second projected trip—this one to the United States—was abruptly cancelled. On the outbreak of war, the Duke made his defeatist sentiments amply and tactless-



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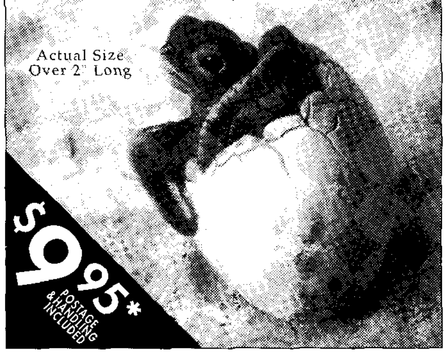

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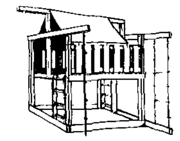

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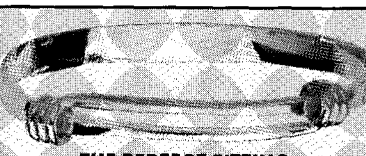

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ly plain, served for a brief period with the British Military Mission in France, and, when the German Army broke through Holland and Belgium, fled to Spain with the Duchess. There an unseemly wrangle took place with the British government about arrangements for their evacuation, and German intelligence hatched a plot to kidnap the Duke, with a view to installing him as a puppet monarch in the event of England's surrender. Ziegler maintains that Windsor knew little about this and would never have been a Nazi collaborator. But that can be no more than surmise.

Eventually, Churchill persuaded the Duke to become governor of the Bahamas. There, for the duration of the war, he discharged his proconsular duties with a grudging competence, mingled with such occasional imaginative touches as his vigorous support for the Out Islands Development Plan. But he was still defeatist about Britain's military prospects, constantly complained that he had been banished to a backwater, and committed several major errors of judgment, most notably in the aftermath of the much publicized murder of Sir Harry Oakes, a Canadian businessman of dubious repute. Time and again, he pestered his brother to recognize and receive the Duchess, and pestered the Prime Minister to find him a better job. But in neither endeavor was he successful. The King, his wife, and his mother would not be moved, and although Churchill was personally sympathetic, there was nothing he could, or would, do to alleviate the situation. Nor, after Labour's victory in the general election of 1945, was the new Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, any more favorably disposed toward the Duke's pleas. Predictably, the Duke's relations with the Royal Family deteriorated still further. In the early nineteen-fifties, he twice returned to England—in each case without the Duchess—to attend the funerals of King George VI and Queen Mary. Outwardly, he was affable and composed, but inwardly he seethed with bitterness and resentment. "What a smug stinking lot my relations are," he exploded almost incoherently in a letter to the Duchess, "and you've never seen such a seedy worn-out bunch of old hags most of them have become."

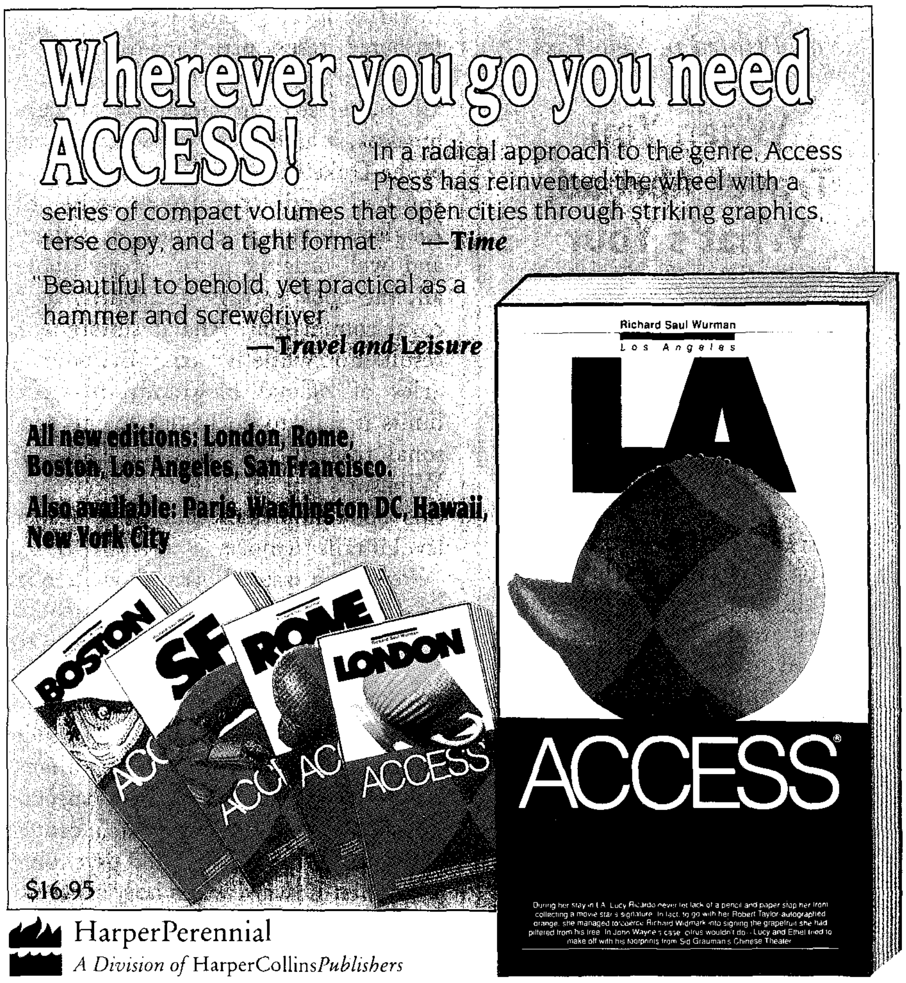
With no prospect of an official position, and with no hope, even though there was a new sovereign, that his wife would ever be received at court, there was nothing left for the Duke to do but to make the best of what he reluctantly recognized must be a life of permanent exile. The Windsors settled in France again, entertained lavishly, and spent much time travelling, especially in the United States. The Duke watched his investments with care, puttered for hours in his garden, and (with much assistance) wrote his memoirs, "A King's Story." For a man so lacking in inner resources, though, it was a lonely and empty life. His political views, which had never been liberal, even in his youth, grew increasingly reactionary. However, relations between the Windsors and the Royal Family began gradually to thaw. In 1967, both the Duke and the Duchess were invited to attend the dedication of a plaque outside Marlborough House in memory of Queen Mary. In 1972, by which time the Duke had been stricken with inoperable cancer, Queen Elizabeth, while visiting Paris, paid a timely call on her uncle. Ten days later, he was dead.

BECAUSE so much has already been written about the Windsors, the broad outlines and many of the details of Ziegler's biography are thoroughly familiar. But, having enjoyed unrestricted access to the royal archives, to the Cabinet minutes in the Public Record Office, and to the private papers of all the significant actors in this drama, he naturally has much to add to the earlier and more narrowly based accounts of Donaldson and Bloch. His discovery of two thousand-odd letters that the Prince of Wales wrote to Freda Dudley Ward during the nineteen-twenties has enabled him to fill in what had previously been a significant blank in our knowledge of the Prince's life, and also to demonstrate the full extent of his psychological dependence on her. In the same way, Ziegler's careful study of Cabinet minutes and of the papers of such crucial political figures as Neville Chamberlain and Winston Churchill shows just how much time successive governments were obliged to lavish on the Duke's affairs, often—as in 1937 and 1940—when there were more important things for them to be doing. And the fact that Ziegler has been able to consult the papers of Hardinge and Lascelles, as well as those of King George VI, Queen Elizabeth, and Queen Mary, enables him to set the

Duke's complaints about the way he was treated after 1936 in a broader perspective. We are now told, for the first time, the full story of the post-abdication financial settlement and the controversy to which it gave rise, and can better understand why the Royal Family took, and maintained, what seemed to the Duke so vindictive and uncompromising an attitude toward the Duchess.

Compared with previous official royal biographies, this book thus seems almost breathtaking in its candor. But how does Ziegler fare in reconciling the conflicting accounts offered by Frances Donaldson and Michael Bloch? In general, he agrees with the interpretation of Edward VIII's life and character put forward by Donaldson: a gifted and glamorous youth who—somehow, somewhere—went tragically wrong. At the same time, he follows Bloch in doing full justice to the Duke's abiding sense of bitterness and betrayal, and in suggesting that King George VI was strongly encouraged—by his mother and his wife, and by Alec Hardinge and Alan Lascelles—to take a harsher line with his errant elder brother than he might have chosen to do if he had been left to himself. But in addition—and this is something that Donaldson was not concerned to do and Bloch had no intention of doing—Ziegler makes a forceful case for the inexorable rightness of the Royal Family's actions. Given the iron logic of the rules governing admission to the Royal Family in the nineteen-thirties, the only attitude that its members could adopt to the Duchess in the aftermath of the abdication was one of complete public ostracism. And once they had taken up that position there was no real prospect that it would ever be—or could ever be—abandoned.

It is impossible not to be impressed by the skill that the author continually displays in reconciling so many discrepant accounts, interpretational contradictions, and conflicting viewpoints. Although this is the official life of a maverick monarch, whose own official life was short, sensational, and suspect, the author writes with an even-tempered mellifluousness that would have done credit to Nicolson or Pope-Hennessy or Wheeler-Bennett. Everyone's faults are readily admitted, everyone's feelings are invariably respected, and everyone is sooner or later given the benefit of the doubt. Family quarrels,



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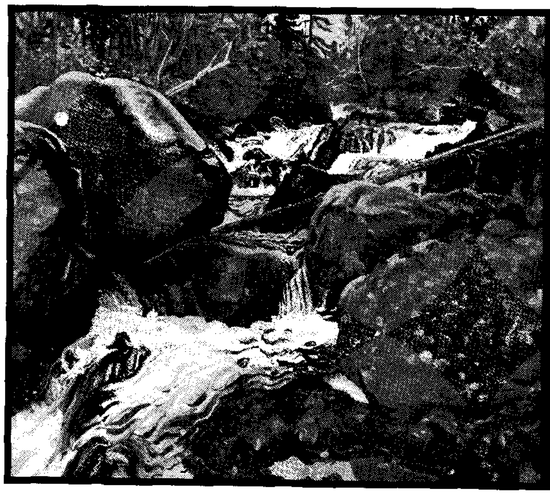

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thwarted love, griping jealousy, long-harbored resentment, insurmountable estrangement, deep personal sadness—all these searing domestic unhappinesses, which were the very essence of the Duke's unenviable existence, are soothed and smoothed aside by Ziegler's urbane, detached, emollient, and well-ordered prose. Here, above all, the book betrays its identity as a royal commission. And it suffers as a result. For while it pushes the boundaries of official biography to their limits it fails to do justice to the personal tragedy that was the Duke of Windsor's life and fate. On every page this book impresses, but at a deeper level it fails to move.

Perhaps it was deliberately written in this mandarin mode in the hope of ending the controversy that clung to Edward VIII for so much of his adult life and has continued to haunt and embarrass the Royal Family long after his death. But it leaves too many unanswered questions for such an expectation to be realized. Some of them center on its subject's character and psychology. When Edward was a boy, his sense of his own worth was inadequately developed. When he was Prince of Wales, he was high-strung, drank too much, and ate and slept too little. When he was King, he was lonely, frightened, and inclined to see conspiracies all around him. And when he was Duke of Windsor his long exile only fed his paranoia. At his best, he could dazzle by his charm and his humanity, but at his worst he was selfish and narcissistic. He was loyal yet ruthless, mean yet generous. He was a solitary individual, yet the crowds adored him. No wonder Ziegler abandons the attempt to make sense of all this, and wearily concludes that the Duke was "a kaleidoscope of conflicting elements." But, while that may be a judicious summing up, it hardly radiates imaginative insight. After five hundred pages, the subject of this biography remains irritatingly elusive.

Nor has Ziegler resolved the deeper contradiction that underlies the life and career of his subject. Was Edward, as his critics at court averred, a genetic freak, a rotten apple, a randomly unfortunate aberration from the decent and dutiful family norm? Or was he, as might be more subversively argued, a man who in many ways ran recognizably true to the royal type but somehow got out of control? In many ways, he was indeed a textbook product of his dynasty and profession. His upbringing was no different from that of his younger brothers, and his lack of intellectual curiosity and aesthetic refinement was a characteristic he shared with both George V and George VI. As Prince of Wales, he disagreed with his father, but quarrels between fathers and sons had been a common feature of Royal Family life since the eighteenth century. He disliked party politicians, but so had every English king from the time of William III. Like most British monarchs, he held generally reactionary political views, and as he grew older he took an obsessive delight in medals and uniforms, precedence and protocol. And, like any member of his royal caste, he had a lamentably limited knowledge of the real world and was almost pathetically dependent on servants and secretaries for his day-to-day existence.

In all these ways, the man who became the Duke of Windsor was a recognizable British royal. But in other ways he stubbornly (and inexplicably) refused to conform. He rebelled against the dutiful ethos his parents sought to instill in him, wanted his private life and loves to be his own business, and took against the courtiers, prelates, and aristocrats who had furnished his father's entourage. He was prepared to renounce his heritage and his destiny, on the ground that no throne was worth the price he was required to pay for it. He willfully refused to understand his constitutional role as king, failed to realize the magnitude of his action in abdicating, and was no more successful in grasping his position as Duke of Windsor. Therein, perhaps, lay the essence of his tragedy. He was determined to rebel against a system that he only dimly understood, and rebellions as ill-founded as that stand little chance of success. He may have been the one that got away, but, having made his great escape, he found, like Bonnie Prince Charlie before him, that he had nowhere to go.

—DAVID CANNADINE

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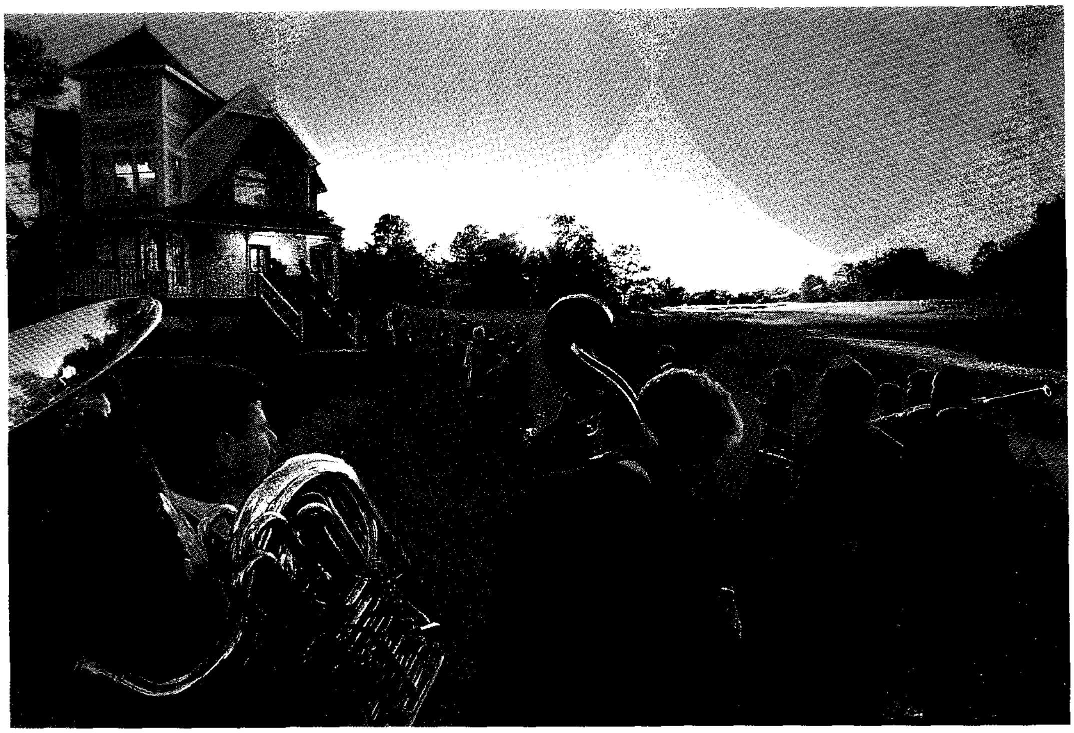

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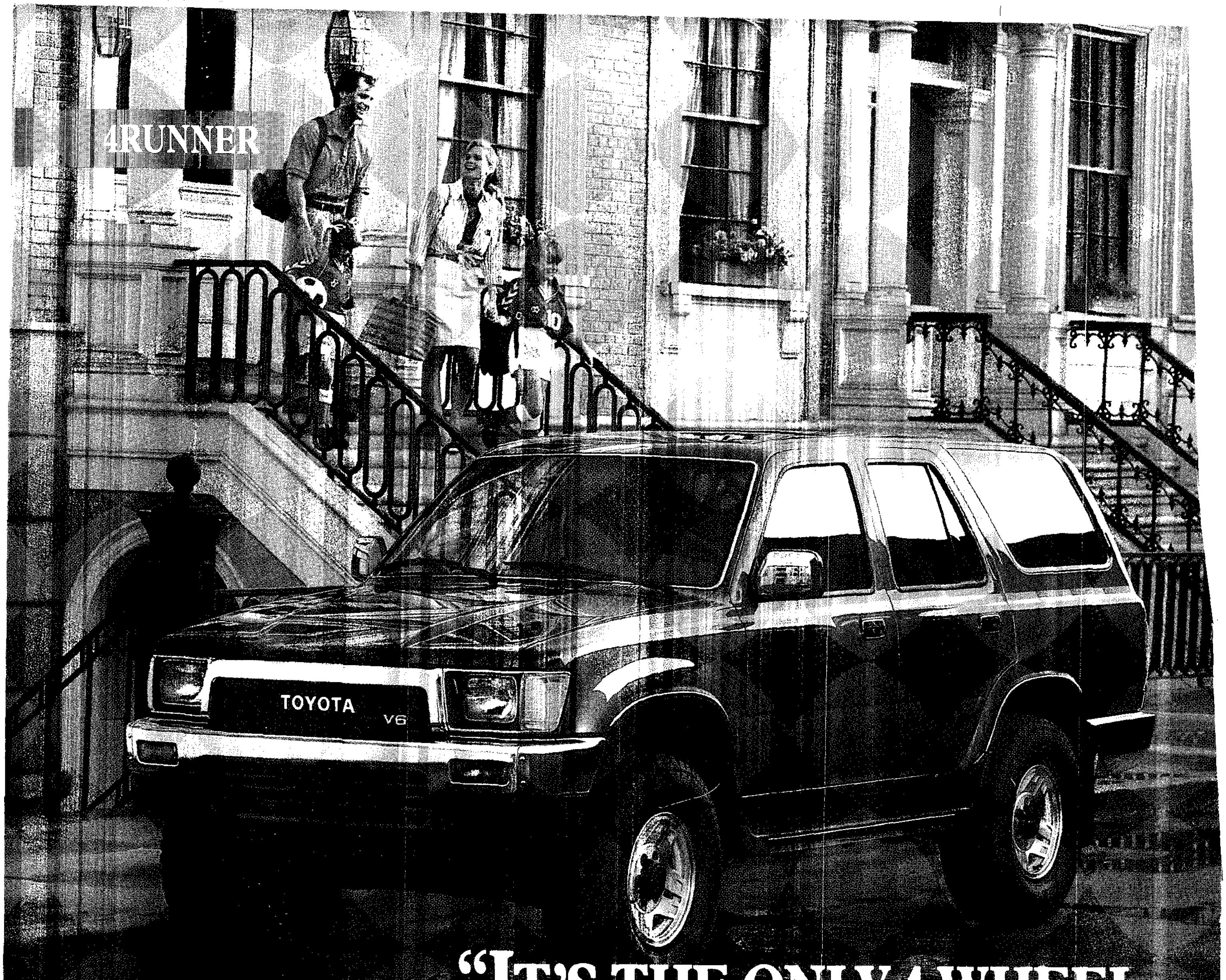

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